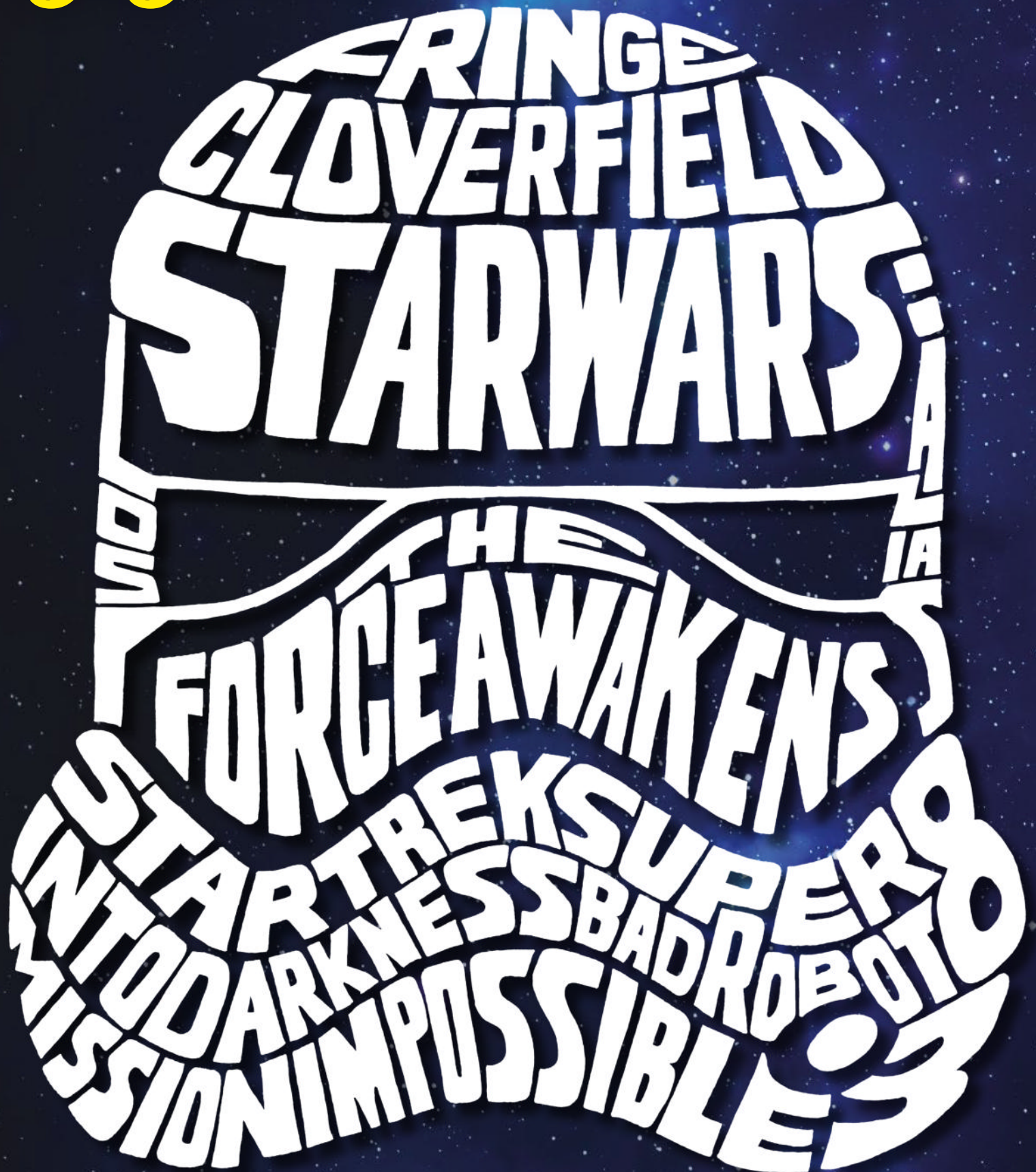


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WELCOME

He was the original fan boy: obsessed with *Star Wars*; making cheeky home movies in the playground; protégé of Spielberg as a teenager; composer for lo-fi horror movies while still in school – but now he's directing the biggest movie in the galaxy! And with *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* glimmering on the horizon, what better time to celebrate the genius of J.J. Abrams? We've taken an in-depth look at an impressive career, ranging from mind-blowing TV like *Alias*, *Lost*, *Fringe* and *Person Of Interest* to explosive blockbusters like *Mission: Impossible III*, *Super 8* and of course *Star Trek* and *Star Trek Into Darkness*. Our pages are packed with on-set reports and interviews with J.J. as well as his cast, crew and colleagues, plus behind-the-scenes looks at all his great movies and shows. And then there's *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* – we've got pages and pages of previews, sneak peeks and interviews with the new cast as well as J.J. himself. He's a legend of cinema.

The force is strong with this one.

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IT'S ALL ABOUT...



J.J. Fact File

Name: Jeffrey Jacob 'J.J.' Abrams.

Born: 27 June 1966.

Hollywood Hitman

In the run up to *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, we chart the rise and rise of J.J. Abrams and the road that took him to a galaxy far, far away...

WORDS: RICHARD EDWARDS

Where Steven Spielberg ruled the '80s, the '10s will belong to Jeffrey Jacob Abrams. Okay, it could be a bit early to make such a claim, but with *Star Wars: The*

Force Awakens set to smash box office records he's a safe bet for man of the decade. Quite right too, as the ultimate Hollywood multi-hyphenate (he's worked as a writer, director, creator, composer...), Abrams has a keen understanding of what audiences want to see.

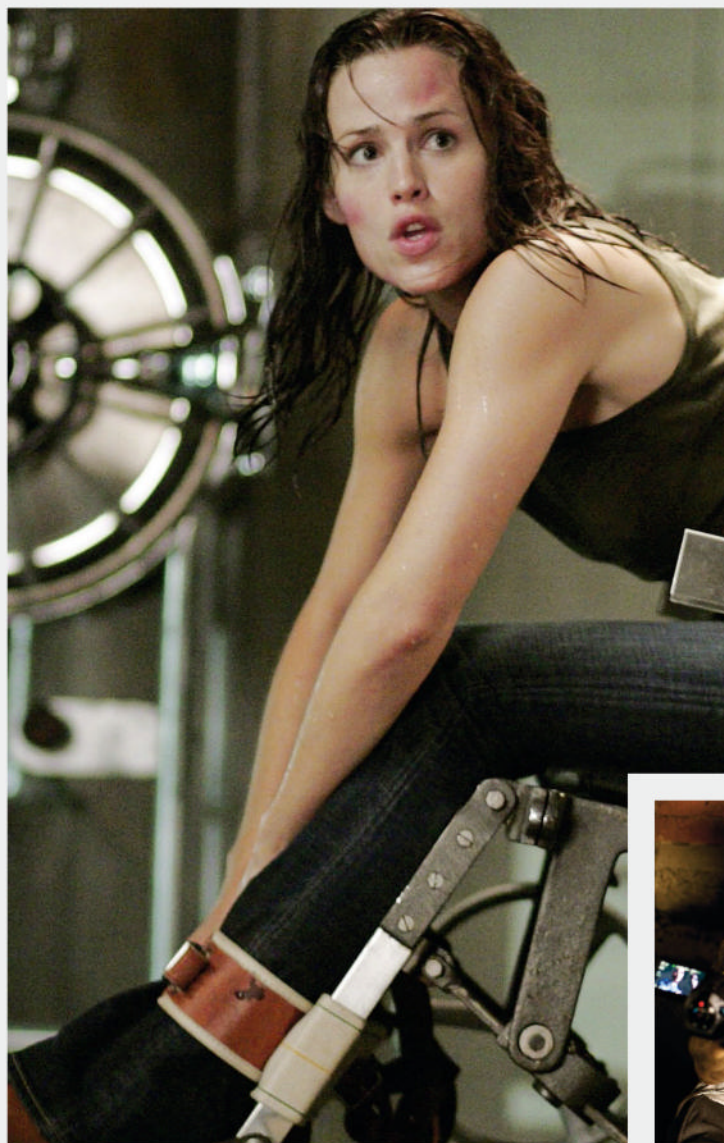
That's because, ahead of everything else, he's an ordinary geek who happens to have access to awesome special effects and the cream of Hollywood talent. Unlike the preceding generation of movie and TV moguls, Abrams had the advantage of being born at the right time to be a child of *Star Wars*, and >>

Alias

Spies and students. TV, 2001 - 2006
J.J. plays: Creator, writer, executive producer, director, theme composer

The show that turned Abrams into a Hollywood player, and did much to establish the blueprint for slick, intelligent drama that's defined his subsequent career. Where Joss Whedon laid the groundwork for shows led by young, attractive, all-action heroines with *Buffy*, Abrams put his own spin on the idea by plunging Jennifer Garner's university student Sydney Bristow into a world where double crossing and double agents sat side-by-side with double English.

While most US shows aimed at young audiences in the early '00s were all about standalone episodes, *Alias* rewarded regular viewers with a complex plot where expecting the unexpected became essential. It's also the series that turned Abrams into a big-league Hollywood movie director, when an impressed Tom Cruise asked him to take control of the mega-budget *Mission: Impossible III* – not a bad way to make your debut as a big-screen director.



Mission: Impossible III

Abrams' feature directorial debut.
 Film, 2006 **J.J. plays:** Writer and director

Hot off the success of *Alias*, Abrams was hand-picked by Tom Cruise to revive the *Mission: Impossible* movie franchise after directors David Fincher and Joe Carnahan both took a look at the threequel before moving on.

After binge-watching the first two seasons of *Alias*, Cruise was so sure that Abrams was his man that Paramount agreed to delay production for a whole year so that Abrams could fulfil his TV commitments first. When he finally kicked off production, Abrams admitted that he felt the *M:I* franchise hadn't really had a "defining episode" yet, and wholeheartedly made it his own. Reining in the camp excess of *M:I 2*, his film was slick, action-packed and stuffed with humour. Cruise returned as Ethan Hunt, and he had a few new friends to play with, including Simon Pegg as Benji and Michelle Monaghan as his fiancée.

Abrams' vision ended up being so strong, it set the mould for the *M:I* films that would follow – and he'd remain on as the franchise godfather.



Cloverfield

Manhattan monster mayhem. Film, 2008
J.J. plays: Producer

"I want a great monster movie. I've wanted a monster movie for so long. We need a monster movie!" That's how Abrams introduced the San Diego Comic-Con to *Cloverfield*, and at that time, just six months ahead of the movie's release, it was pretty much everything we knew about it.

Filmed in secret and promoted via tiny snippets of information, the movie proved that subterfuge is still possible in the age of the blogger. Viral ads popped up online (including one for Slusho!, a fizzy drink that cameos in most Bad Robot productions), and legions of fans began speculating. Abrams the producer (and the showman) got the world excited about a film they knew nothing about. It was an act of genius that's proved to be massively influential – echoes of *Cloverfield*'s virals can be seen in the campaigns for *The Dark Knight* and *District 9*.

Told via 'found' camcorder footage, the story of New York being terrorised by a monster from the deep followed an unknown cast struggling to escape from the disintegrating city. The way it was shot – all stolen glimpses – gave it incredible intensity. Indeed, keeping the monster out of sight for most of the film made for tantalising terror. Knowing more about the *Cloverfield* threat would only diminish its power – no news yet on that mooted sequel, but who knows what J.J. will scare up next.



Star Trek

Abrams's biggest reboot. Film, 2009

J.J. plays: Director and producer

Star Trek was as good as dead – lacklustre movies and a spin-off series too far had made sure of that – so Paramount's decision to give the franchise another chance was a risky one. Luckily, it had the sense to entrust the comeback to a man whose brain was so in tune with what the series needed, he made *Star Trek* cool for the first time in decades.

The key to Abrams's success was that he wasn't a massive *Trek* nerd. To him, four decades of canon were a jumping off point rather than a shackle – something to mine for inspiration rather than an excuse for falling into hoary old clichés.

Abrams realised that *Star Trek*'s beating heart was Kirk and Spock, and that pretty much everyone has heard of the USS Enterprise's captain and first officer. But he also recognised that he had to appeal to a new demographic – the sort of people who'd never have contemplated watching a *Trek* movie before. That his entry in the series has become the most lucrative by some distance shows he knew what he was doing. This was *Star Trek* seen through fun, *Star Wars*-shaped glasses, with sparkling dialogue, plenty of heart and some of the finest space-set action scenes since *Return Of The Jedi*.



he's therefore never had to second guess punters' tastes – he just makes the films and telly he'd like to watch.

Admittedly, Abrams had a head start on most of his contemporaries. His father, Gerald W. Abrams, was a successful television producer, and hanging around with him on studio lots had a big effect on young J.J.'s formative years. "I would go on set with my father and I'd be desperate to be on the floor and to be working, doing something," Abrams has said. "It was like a physical pain, I so wanted to do it. And I didn't care what – I wanted to be there and do anything. And when he had an office at Paramount, which he did for a number of years, when I'd go to work with him, I got to know some of the guards and they'd let me go in and watch the rehearsals of these sitcoms – *Happy Days*, *Laverne And Shirley*, *Mork And Mindy*. I'd soak it all up and that's how it started."

Abrams took his first tentative steps in the industry cleaning up prints for Steven Spielberg, before composing the score for '80s B-movie *Nightbeast*. His early screenplays bagged big stars – James Belushi in *Taking Care Of Business*, Harrison Ford in *Regarding Henry*, Mel Gibson in *Forever Young* – Jerry Bruckheimer/Michael Bay actioner *Armageddon* followed, before Abrams had a crack at TV with college drama *Felicity*.

COLLEGE INDUCTION

A show about a girl's 'adventures' following her high-school crush to uni might sound light years away from the high-concept ideas that have become Abrams's bread and butter, but it was arguably the breakthrough of his career. Had *Felicity* floundered, *Alias* might never have been greenlit, there'd be no *Lost* and *Star Trek* would still be languishing in an unfashionable corner of the Alpha Quadrant. Besides, despite the lack of cool gadgets and forcibly relocated polar bears, the lives and

"I would go on set with my father and I'd be desperate to be working"

J.J. ABRAMS

loves of beautiful young people in New York allowed Abrams to explore themes that have always been key to him.

"Especially in television, the more that you're telling a story about a family, the better the show will be," he explained during the promotional tour for *Star Trek*. "And the family can be an actual family, a group of friends or the crew of a starship. You're telling the story of relationships and how characters grow."

>>

Super 8

Abrams homages Spielberg. Film, 2011
J.J. plays: Writer, director and producer

After working for Steven Spielberg as a youngster, Abrams came full circle in his forties with this Amblin-esque sci-fi (it was a co-production between Amblin, Bad Robot and Paramount), which tips its hat to *E.T.* and *The Goonies* (broken families, youths in peril, dangerous adventures) as a group of youngsters get caught up in an alien conspiracy.

While early reports on the film hinted *Super 8* would be a sequel to *Cloverfield*, it ended up being a standalone film masterminded by Abrams and his hero ("I called Spielberg and he said yes," Abrams remembered at the time). The duo came up with the story together, based on Abrams' original concept of a blockbuster alien invasion flick (partly inspired by his own childhood making films with a Super 8 camera), and was shot for a relatively modest budget of \$50m.

Laced with nostalgia and featuring some great performances from its young cast, the film was a box office smash, taking the number one spot and went on to make \$260m worldwide. Talk about super.



Star Trek Into Darkness

Abrams boldly goes back into space. Film, 2013
J.J. plays: Director and producer

Tasked with following up the smash hit that was 2009's *Star Trek*, Abrams reteamed with writers Roberto Orci, Alex Kurtzman and Damon Lindelof for a standalone film that further developed the relationship between Kirk (Chris Pine) and Spock (Zachary Quinto). Abrams' heft had increased considerably since the first film – *Into Darkness*' release date was pushed back six months so that more work could be done on the script, and Abrams was adamant the title wouldn't include a numeral, even though it was a sequel.

Where the first film had the unenviable task of setting up the new cast and alternate timeline, the second *Trek* hits the ground running, and Abrams delivers a thrilling outing that ups the ante. With Benedict Cumberbatch on reptilian form as Khan, and the film kicking up the action, Abrams not only succeeded at making *Trek* cool again, he also made it fun. The upcoming *Star Trek 3* (aka *Star Trek Beyond*) has a lot to live up to.





Star Wars: The Force Awakens

Abrams shoots for the stars. Film, 2015
J.J. plays: Writer, director and producer

Abrams has always been a *Star Wars* fanboy – he recreated *Star Trek* in that franchise's image, after all. So it came as no surprise when Abrams signed up to head to a galaxy far, far away, helming Disney's ambitious *Star Wars* reboot. It wasn't an easy decision (Abrams admits he had doubts), but as anybody who's seen the film's trailer will agree, he was definitely the right man for the job.

"It was really about being willing to take that leap, and jump into the possibilities of what these characters are doing, and where they are," Abrams said of coming aboard. Who could resist catching up with Luke, Leia and Han, though? Not this geek, with Abrams co-writing the script with *Empire Strikes Back* alum Lawrence Kasdan and casting some of the most exciting young actors in Hollywood and beyond.

With Adam Driver and Gwendoline Christie on villain duties, and Oscar Isaac, John Boyega and Daisy Ridley fighting on the side of good, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* promises to eradicate the bad taste left by the prequels for an epic fight among the stars.



It was spy-fi action drama *Alias*, however, that established the Abrams brand, with its twisty-turny storytelling and complex plot arcs. Tom Cruise liked the series so much that he recruited Abrams to take the helm for the third *Mission: Impossible* movie.

The arena may have been new, but Abrams brought some old cohorts along for the ride, inviting *Alias* vets (and future *Star Trek* writers and *Fringe* co-creators) Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman to share the scriptwriting. Abrams has always chosen to surround himself with likeminded talents, and once you're embraced by Bad Robot (Abrams's production outfit), you tend to stay there.

Abrams's philosophy of leaving the day-to-day running of shows such as *Lost* and *Fringe* to trusted lieutenants is key – in fact, he told us that it's the secret of his success: "It's important to keep honest people around who are talented and worthy, and who will tell you the truth when you have an idea. The scariest thing is people who are really talented who surround themselves with sycophants who keep telling them how good they are. I work with the same people over and over again, and all of those people are tough on story. None of us are yes men and we're honest about things that aren't working. The best idea wins. I'm always grateful for people who are able to encourage me and inspire me to do better, and vice versa."

THE NEXT STEP

These days, Abrams' name is enough to get a project made. This is the guy who successfully rebooted *Star Trek* in a way that pleased fans, newcomers and critics alike. And after the disappointment of the prequels J.J. could well be the *only* director to turn scepticism to euphoria over a *Star Wars* refresh.

In Abrams's eyes, entertainment and storytelling are paramount. Even the build-up

"We're honest about things that aren't working. The best idea wins"

J.J. ABRAMS

to release is part of his process. He thrives on secrets, dripfeeding information to fans to maximise the hype.

The mysteries in Abrams' own story often surround which project he'll tackle next. With both the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* universes wanting his attention, plus a raft of new projects in the pipeline (turn to page 138 for our take), all we can say is that whatever his future holds, you'd be crazy to bet against it being a success.

PART ONE 1982 - 2000

“I could not have less of a plan. I’ve just been lucky to work on things that I felt would be cool to see. Growing up, I loved *The Twilight Zone* as much as I loved *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*. My favourite things have nearly always been extreme and fantastical, involving some kind of visual effects, but also very emotionally driven.”*



MAKING MUSIC

J.J. Abrams made an early entry into the movie business aged just 16, but not in the director's chair...

Before *Star Wars*. Before *Star Trek*. Even before he put pen to paper on his first produced screenplay, *Taking Care Of Business*, J.J. Abrams found his way into the movie industry not via directing or writing, but as a film composer. It's well-known that Abrams was given a leg-up into the industry in 1982 by Steven Spielberg, who hired 16-year-old

Abrams and his buddy Matt Reeves to clean up some old 8mm prints that had been gathering dust for decades. That same year, though, another, less-famous director gave Abrams his first job on a movie proper. That movie was shlocky horror *Nightbeast*, and the director was notoriously eccentric indie filmmaker Don Dohler. Inspired by Dohler's own 1979 film *The Alien Factor*, *Nightbeast* is a lean, low-budget, 80-minute monster flick in which an

alien crash-lands on Earth and terrorises a small American town. It's trashy and daft, but created with love and affection with an eye on classic creature features.

Abrams described Dohler, who passed away in 2006, as "the horror movie version of John Waters" thanks to his Baltimore roots, not to mention his charmingly kitschy approach to filmmaking. Abrams was a young fan and, when he started reading movie magazine *Cinemagic*, which was founded in the '80s by Dohler, Abrams wrote to the director asking him about the industry.

"He wrote me back and I told him I was into music and doing these sound effects and scores for these movies I was doing," Abrams told *The Washington Post* in 2011. "He literally out of the blue asked me if I'd be interested in doing music for his movie, having never heard any music that I had done. It was classic."

Accepting the job, 16-year-old Abrams was sent videotapes of the *Nightbeast* dailies. "I'd go upstairs, and I would use whatever instrument I could use," he says of his first composing gig. "I had a little porta-studio, a four-track thing or a reel-to-reel tape deck. It was just the most preposterous set-up and I would send him back music, some of which he used in the movie."

Though *Nightbeast* has since been (perhaps rightly) relegated to the bowels of cult



Abrams has composed the theme music for many of his TV shows.

"It was in my head, so I put my headphones on and recorded it"

J.J. ABRAMS

moviedom and late-night broadcasts, it was a big deal to Abrams at the beginning of his career, coming before he'd even attended college. "It was just a very exciting thing, to be involved in a movie on any level," Abrams told *The Washington Post*. "And then to get a credit on a movie was literally the thing that all my life I had said, if I get my name on a movie, a credit on a film, I could die happy. That was all I needed."

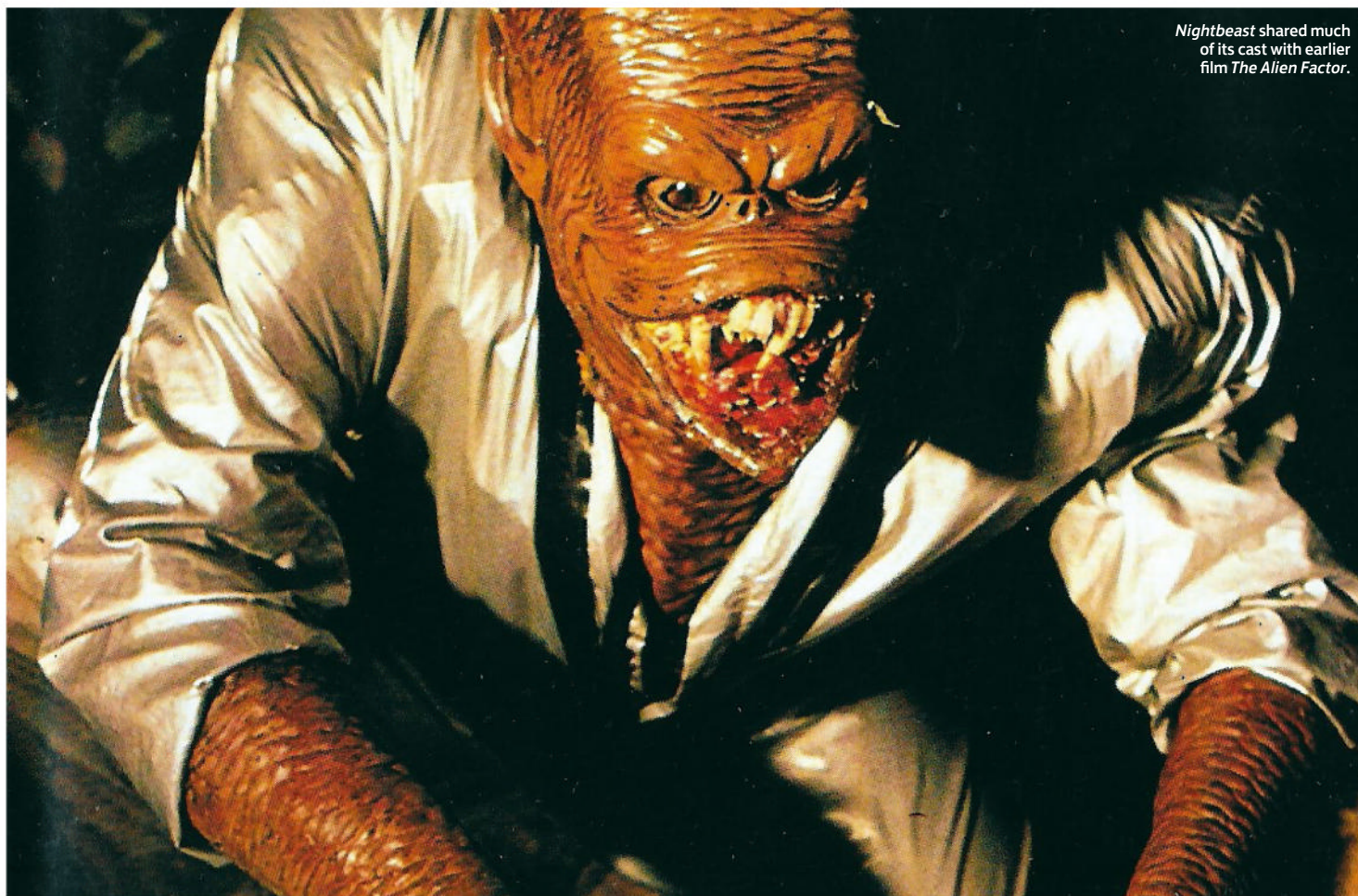
Abrams' career as a film composer was brief. After *Nightbeast*, the only other film he contributed a score to was 1994 sci-fi anthology *Future Shock*, working with buddy Matt Reeves on his short 'Mr. Petrified Forest'. Music has continued to form a large part of Abrams' career, though. He wrote the theme song ('A New Version Of You') for his first TV series, *Felicity*, and went on to create the theme tunes for his other shows *Alias*, *Lost*, *Fringe*, *Alcatraz* and *Person Of Interest*.

Clearly, he has a passion for music that extends beyond idle tinkering. "I had this idea



Cinemagic inspired Abrams to connect with publisher and director Don Dohler.





Nightbeast shared much of its cast with earlier film *The Alien Factor*.

for this new song," he remembers of coming up with the *Fringe* theme. "I was in bed at night, it was in my head, so I snuck upstairs, put my headphones on and recorded it. It was just one of those things where you get an idea, lightning striking."

Music is in Abrams' blood, and when he sets up a new TV series, he can't help but reconnect with his filmmaking roots (though his composer work now often goes uncredited). The same was true on the short-lived *Alcatraz* TV show, which Abrams helped out on despite being busy assembling the first *Star Trek*. "What I've been trying to do is help, whether it's reading the scripts, giving notes, giving suggestions on cuts and doing the theme music, to get it up and running," he said at the time.

And while Abrams contributed instrumental ideas to the theme tune for *Star Trek Into Darkness* (even penning bonus track "The Growl"), he was no plans to steal the music sheet away from John Williams on *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*.

"All I will say is, just to state the facts of it: I am about to show John Williams 30 minutes of a *Star Wars* movie that he has not seen [and] that I directed," he enthused to *Vanity Fair*. "That's probably as surreal as it gets in my professional life experience." Talk about coming full circle.

Nightbeast

Abrams goes the monster mash...

When? 1982.

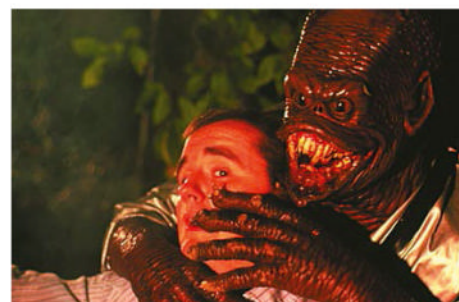
What? Schlocky sci-fi horror partly inspired by director Don Dohler's 1979 film *The Alien Factor*. A reptilian E.T. crashes its ship in a small town and cuts a bloody swathe through its population.

Who? Tom Griffith, Jamie Zemarel, Karin Kardian.

J.J.'s role? Though the film sounds like something Abrams might have directed himself as a teenager, he actually only provided some of the film's music after connecting with director Dohler. Still, you've got to start somewhere, right?

Any good? A campy, ridiculous, micro-budget horror-fest, *Nightbeast* won't win any prizes for originality, but it boasts a creakily infectious charm. One to watch on a boozy Friday night in.

Our rating: ★★



Not what Abrams envisioned, but who complains when they cast James Belushi in your first film?



© Kobal 12

Taking Care Of Business

Action-packed chuckles...

When? 1990.

What? Advertising exec Spencer Barnes loses his work Filofax. When convict Jimmy comes across it, he decides to steal Spencer's identity.

Who? James Belushi, Charles Grodin, Anne De Salvo.

J.J.'s role? It was the first script Abrams wrote, working with fellow scribe Jill Mazursky.

J.J. says: "They changed the whole thing. They made the guy who loses his book [Charles Grodin] into a very successful guy, and the guy who steals it into Jim Belushi. It was still a great experience, and it gave me time and money to write more scripts."

Any good? The combined comedy power of Belushi and Grodin make this identity theft chuckler all the funnier. Though they spend most of the movie apart, when they eventually come crashing together, the results are explosive.

Our rating: ★★



Regarding Henry

Harrison Ford plays mind games.

When? 1991.

What? New York lawyer Henry is shot during a convenience store robbery. Though he survives, he suffers from retrograde amnesia and struggles to regain his speech and mobility, which impacts his relationship with his wife and daughter.

Who? Harrison Ford, Annette Bening, Michael Haley, Mikki Allen.

J.J.'s role: This was the second script Abrams sold. He also appears in a cameo role as a delivery boy.

J.J. says: "I was so excited when Harrison Ford signed to do it, and then to get Mike Nichols to direct it... I was in total heaven. I mean, I had been a fan of his for years, my parents had his records with Elaine May, and oh, god, it was so f*cking great. I was on the set all the time, and even though I disagreed with some of the things they did, I was too inexperienced and nervous to voice my opinion."

Any good? Ford excels in a role that challenges him in new and unexpected ways, while Abrams' script finds the beauty and hope in a seemingly impossible situation. Underrated.

Our rating: ★★★

Harrison Ford: post-Lucas
Star Wars, pre-J.J. Star Wars.



© Kobal



Elijah Wood back when he really was the size of a hobbit.

© Kobal/IZ

Forever Young

It's Mel Gibson on ice!

When? 1992.

What? Sci-fi romance in which a 1930s pilot is cryogenically frozen and wakes up in the '90s.

Who? Mel Gibson, Jamie Lee Curtis, Elijah Wood.

J.J.'s role: Abrams wrote the script, based on an original short story called 'The Rest Of Daniel'. Warner Bros purchased the script for a record-breaking \$2m as a vehicle for Gibson, who passed on the director's chair, but signed on as star.

J.J. says: "I know this is gonna sound crazy, but Mel is just so f*cking good-looking that you can't believe it. He has a really funny personality, and you find that you can forget that he's this mega-movie star when you're with him. But the truth is, I spent a lot of time just staring into his eyes."

Any good? With its mix of time travel and romance, there are hints of Abrams' trademark genre-splicing, but it's an early effort from a writer still finding his voice. The film's overt sentimentality may grate some viewers, even if Gibson has star quality by the barrel.

Our rating: ★★★



We're not convinced that
cigar would stay alight.

1982 - 2000

Gone Fishin'

A buddy road movie
about fishing?

When? 1997.

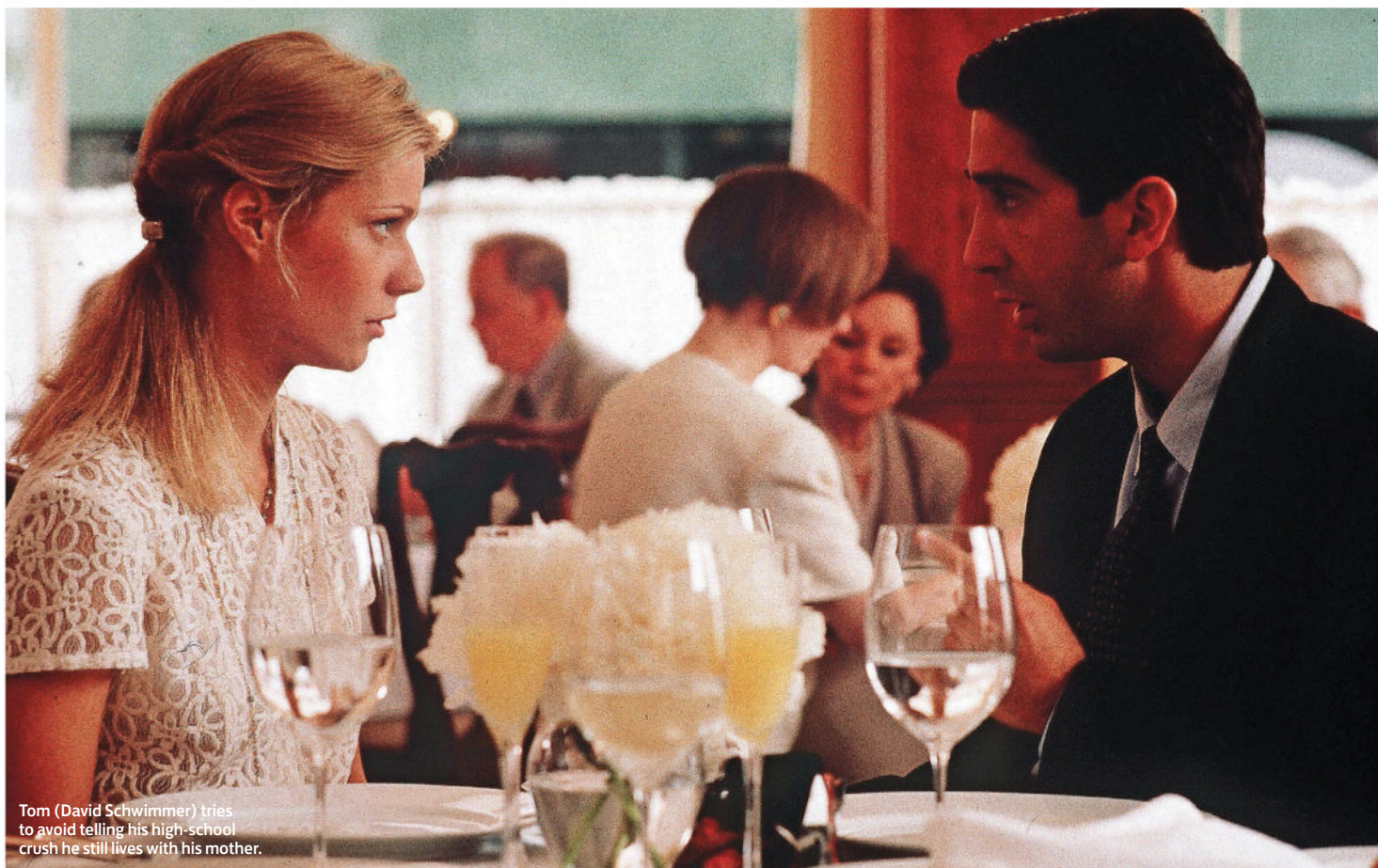
What? Comedy about two life-long
buddies whose fishing trip is
interrupted when their car's stolen.

Who? Joe Pesci, Danny Glover,
Nick Brimble, Rosanna Arquette,
Lynn Whitfield.

J.J.'s role: Abrams co-wrote the script
with his *Taking Care Of Business* co-writer
Jill Mazursky.

Any good? Directed by Dean Cain's dad,
this is a buddy comedy where, sadly, a
lot of the laughs are more miss than hit.
Still, it's a mildly diverting romp with
Pesci and Glover delivering the
one-liners thick and fast.

Our rating: ★★★



Tom (David Schwimmer) tries to avoid telling his high-school crush he still lives with his mother.

© Kobal 12

The Pallbearer

David Schwimmer goes from *Friends* to a funeral...

When? 1996.

What? Slacker Tom Thompson is asked to be a pallbearer for a former classmate he has no memory of, and attempts to woo his old school crush while 'comforting' the deceased's grieving mother.

Who? David Schwimmer, Gwyneth Paltrow, Toni Collette, Michael Vartan, Michael Rapaport.

J.J.'s role? With Abrams' childhood friend Matt Reeves directing, Abrams oversaw as a producer and was no doubt instrumental in getting the film into the 1996 Cannes Film Festival.

Any good? With its quirky sense of humour and a committed turn by Schwimmer, *The Pallbearer* is a tamer, gloomier version of *The Graduate*. It throws one too many twists into the mix, but for the most part it effectively captures the reality of an aimless twenty-something.

Our rating: ★★



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In J.J.'s first summer blockbuster, an 800-mile-wide space rock is hurtling towards Earth. Can Bruce Willis and Ben Affleck stop it before it wipes out the human race?

WORDS CAM WINSTANLEY AND MARTYN PALMER

ARMAGEDDON

J.J. Fact File *Armageddon* (1998)



What? Apocalyptic action movie in which a team of deep-core drillers attempt to save the Earth from an incoming asteroid.

Who? Bruce Willis, Ben Affleck, Billy Bob Thornton, Liv Tyler, Owen Wilson.

J.J.'s role? Aged 30, J.J. worked on numerous drafts of the film's script and was responsible for punching up the dialogue.

Any good? Big explosions and WWE-style characterisations make this perfect fodder for excitable 12-year-olds. But with a plot-free second half, it's more a \$140 million pizza-and-six-pack film than a worthy contender with action classics like *Face/Off* or *Die Hard*.

Our rating: ★★★

A funny thing happened at the 1998 Cannes Film Festival, when a gaggle of salivating, international journalists congregated to glimpse something – anything – of the summer's big, brash effects showpiece *Armageddon*, scripted by Jonathan Hensleigh and J.J. Abrams. They sheltered from the 90-degree heat in the Olympia Cinema on the Rue de la Pompe, along with the distribution and money men, to watch neither a trailer nor a film, but a mutant hybrid somewhere in between.

The reason it was T-minus-a-bit to *Armageddon* was simple: the movie wasn't quite finished. With such an array of mechanical, model and CGI sequences, the effects houses were working flat-out to wrap the two-hour, \$140 million spectacle for its summer release. Instead, the Cannes crowd had to make do with a typical slice of Hollywood madness: a compromised 50-minute teaser version.

It screened as *Armageddon-Lite*: half the film with many of the action sequences but little of the plot. Still, the effects were great, the action scenes noisy and the one-liners suitably funny. Then came a closing shot of high drama: Bruce Willis, our hero, faces a lonely death in the vacuum of space, and contacts his daughter on Earth via a video link. He says goodbye to his baby before turning away to face his possible

demise in the cold pitch-black. It's moving, it's heartfelt, it's... The hack contingent in the audience were rolling in the aisles with laughter. This wasn't supposed to happen.

Afterwards Willis, in trademark baseball cap, shorts and T-shirt, took to the stage. His impassive Hollywood front slipped for just a moment, betraying what he really thought. "I'm glad you all found the end of the world so funny..."

LAUGH YOUR ROCKS OFF

A strange mood hung over the press conference the following day. Everyone – filmmakers and hacks alike – realised that *Armageddon* was going to be hugely successful. On one side was the talent gathered to rave about their effort: *Top Gun* producer Jerry Bruckheimer, *Bad Boys* director Michael Bay and *The Rock* writer Jonathan Hensleigh (who shared a writing credit on the film with J.J. Abrams).

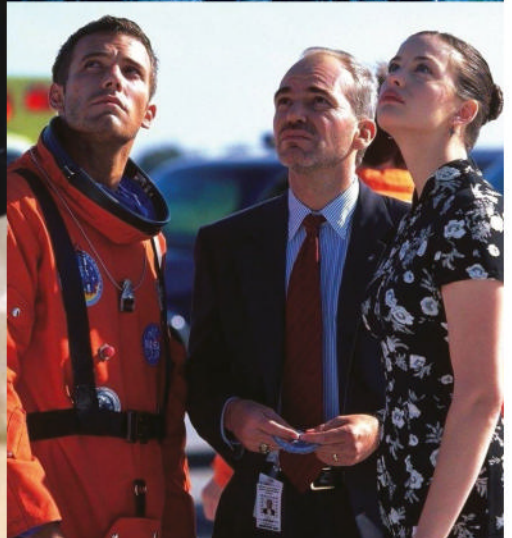
Also present were the stars: Willis, Liv Tyler, Ben Affleck and Steve Buscemi. Facing them were a battery of journos who all wanted to ask the same question: why show such a fragmented version instead of a trailer or the full thing?

Bay: "I wish they hadn't shown it. They assembled it like a movie and that's bad. I don't believe in showing these 50-minute things because it's very misleading. Some of the scenes they showed were two months old

>>



1982 - 2000





Doomsday devised

Designing the end of the world required *Armageddon*'s production designers to nip, tuck and tweak existing technology. Conventional space shuttles are quite cramped, so to hold a large crew plus an 'Armadillo' mobile drill-rig, the movie's 'X-71' shuttle needed to be much larger. It was intended to be sturdier, sleeker and more

cinematic than the real thing, which meant that CGI technicians had to digitally composite a 1/20 scale model of the larger craft onto real footage of a night-time shuttle launch.

"For the Armadillo, we didn't want a conventional look such as a truck, so we started with a Humvee chassis," explains special effects supervisor John Frazier.

A powerful Chevy engine provided the grunt for the stripped-down frame. "The vehicle had to work, it couldn't just sit there and look pretty," he says.

The oil-riggers' suits were devised to look durable enough to withstand asteroid working conditions, making them very hot and heavy. They each weighed 70 pounds,

and contained battery-powered air-conditioning units to stop the visors from misting up, and actors from fainting under the studio lighting. Director Michael Bay told his cast to stop whining about them, and cranked out a set of press-ups in one to prove his point. Although, he later admitted, he was fairly achy the next day.

and we've refined them since then, so I was sitting there cringing and going: 'Oh God, that's so old.' We did that reel for theatre exhibitors and then they decided to bring it to Cannes."

Willis: "Those people laughed because they didn't get it and that was because the f*cking thing was out of context. If you see the real movie, you'll understand what it's all about. The screening was just a commercial for the film."

Tyler: "People laughed? Were they laughing at me? I was laughing at me that day. It was a really hard scene to shoot. I had this tape of Bruce for me to act against and there were all these complications and it just went on and on. And the intimacy just wasn't there. I found the acting in this to be more challenging than anything I've ever done."

BIG BANG THEORY

Every summer, audiences expect something bigger, faster, more confrontational. Abrams certainly understands that, having since helmed his share of blockbusters. He made an indelible mark on *Armageddon*, too, with Michael Bay bringing him in to tweak the film's dialogue. "He liked me because I wasn't afraid of him and I understood who he was," Abrams said of the director, "which was someone who was a little freaked out by how big he'd become so fast."

In *Armageddon*, the danger is an asteroid heading for Earth, and the heroes are a rag-tag crew of international astronauts and deep-core oil drillers. The plan? Save the world (and love-interest Tyler) by drilling to this global-killer's core and dropping a nuke into it. Easy.

Bay: "After *The Rock* I was offered a bunch of things but I didn't really like any of them. Then Jonathan Hensleigh called me up and said he had an idea for a good asteroid movie. We worked out this cool story that was very heroic, didn't involve any guns and had real heart."

Hensleigh: "I'd always wanted to write a story about a situation where civilian experts are forced to go into space. NASA astronauts are hard scientists, but what if NASA had to send an automobile mechanic to fix something an astronaut couldn't? I've met a lot of mechanics who are extraordinarily skilled in fairly complicated realms where a PhD isn't."

Bruckheimer: "It's really a story about individuals who are faced with life-and-death decisions. It's something akin to *The Dirty Dozen* in outer space."

LAUNCH-PADDED SELL

During the production of *Top Gun*, Bruckheimer gained unprecedented co-operation from the US Air Force by showing it in a positive light.

Similarly, the people at NASA are the golden boys and girls of *Armageddon*, so they were happy to help. As well as advising cast and crew, the agency let them film at the Kennedy Space Centre. One event was a rare night-time launch of the space shuttle Atlantis. The production team placed 12 of their Panavision cameras inside blast-proof boxes within the three-mile safety zone and filmed every possible angle for the ultimate in one-take shots.

Bay: "Our biggest challenge was to get NASA's approval: if we hadn't been given it, this movie wouldn't have worked. We wanted it very real and we wanted its hardware as well as its expertise. We can't duplicate that, at least not >>

"We worked out this cool story that was very heroic, didn't involve any guns and had real heart"

MICHAEL BAY



on the scale we were attempting. We wanted to make an epic film."

Buscemi: "NASA had an astronaut named Joe Allen, who was the technical advisor, so we asked him a lot of questions and we also filmed at the Space Centre. I mean, we even had access to the launch pad."

Bruckheimer: "Both NASA and the Air Force were very accommodating. I feel lucky that we were permitted to trample all over its playgrounds, to watch the launch, to walk on the gantry, to meet the astronauts and scientists. It's overwhelming to be a part of their lives, even for a moment."

BLOCKBUSTIN' FEATS

During the '80s, Bruckheimer, with partner Don Simpson, was at the forefront of the move

to replace the director with the producer as the focus of film production. His movies, which are frequently criticised for being no more than vacuous exercises in style over content, are nonetheless on-time, on-budget and invariably successful. "Jerry's a legend," enthuses Affleck. "He invented the blockbuster." But even Bruckheimer films are a collaborative process; everyone has a story to tell.

Bruckheimer: "Audiences are more and more demanding and more sophisticated, and so it becomes more difficult. The hardest part is to get the screenplay to work. When you get it right it can look seamless and easy and seems like anybody can do it. Until you sit in a room with a director, a writer and myself, and say: 'This doesn't work, how are you going to fix it?' That's when you lose the most brain cells."

Affleck: "I was excited by the concept, I was excited by the human aspect and I was excited by the space-age, master-blasters, every-kid's-fantasy element to the movie. Who wouldn't be excited?"

Bruckheimer: "We utilised eight writers on *Armageddon*: it's the old studio system at its best. We used the skills of the industry's most

"We asked him a lot of questions and we also filmed at the Space Centre. I mean, we even had access to the launch pad"

STEVE BUSCEMI

talented writers to do what they do best. It's a process. Jonathan Hensleigh laid out the story, then we had someone come in and work on all the characters and then somebody else to work on the love story. You try to make every scene as multi-layered and as special as you can. It's very difficult to make movies and you want to surround yourself with the smartest minds."

DOUBLE WHAMMY

In 1997, a year before *Armageddon* hit screens, superior lava-flick *Volcano* spluttered out at the box office against *Dante's Peak*, an altogether



duller and less exciting take on the hot-rock theme. *Peak* took a risk, was fast-tracked by the studio at extra cost and made it to the cinemas first. So what about *Deep Impact*, the Elijah Wood end-of-worlder, heading for Earth before *Armageddon*'s own efforts?

Bruckheimer: "I knew all about *Deep Impact* when we were working on pre-production. I never read the material and I haven't seen the film. From what I understand, we have more humour in ours. It's a different approach. You do worry about the other movie because they're very talented film-makers, but

hopefully there is a place for both of us. They have already succeeded, so now it's our turn to get up and bat. Hopefully we'll do well too."

Bay: "We stuck to our schedule, stuck to our release date and didn't waiver. When they found out about us, they rushed everything into production. They said: 'We have to be there first.' But you can't rush a movie like this, you have to do it right or not at all, or the effects will look cheesy. We have real entertainment value in *Armageddon*. It's strong and it's much more upbeat as a movie."

Willis: "This sort of thing happens in Hollywood, it comes up now and again. But there's no competition between the two films and there's a lot of time between our film and theirs. It's just something for you guys to write about."

DOOM WITH A VIEW

You wait years for a film about the destruction of the planet by a cosmic collision, and then two come along at once. But in the vast reaches of space, what are the chances of anything really hitting a certain blue-and-green patch of real estate? And what could be done about it?

Bay: "Listen, I've learned so much about global killers while researching this movie and let me tell you, they're out there. NASA believe the world is wiped out every 10 million years. One expert told me that when one hits, it's like exploding a nuclear bomb – times 10,000. It's fascinating and it's scary. I talked to a scientist and he said that three years ago, a global killer came within 100,000 miles of Earth and we didn't even see it until three days after it had passed. That's very scary."

Willis: "What would I really do? Well, I have three daughters and I would probably go and hang out with them and... I don't know... take some heroin and say goodnight!"

Looking to the future, astronomer Brian Marsden from the International Astronomical Union in Cambridge, Massachusetts announced in March 1997 that the asteroid XF11 was closing in on Earth. He reckoned that at its present speed (17,000 mph), it has a good chance of striking Earth on 26 October, 2028. But, after some hasty calculator and slide-rule work, Marsden re-forecast that it would only come within 600,000 miles of the planet, passing on the other side of the Moon instead. Another near-miss...

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Scott Speedman and Keri Russell, before the infamous haircut.

Felicity

Frothy college drama with great hair...

When? 1998 - 2002.

What? High school grad Felicity ditches her plans to go to med school and follows her crush Ben to university in New York.

Who? Keri Russell, Scott Speedman, Scott Foley.

J.J.'s role? Abrams created *Felicity* with his buddy Matt Reeves (*Cloverfield*). He directed two episodes, wrote 17, and it remains his favourite of all the shows he created: "I miss writing for a show that doesn't have any sort of odd, almost sci-fi bend to it."

J.J. says: "Keri was patently far too beautiful to play Felicity. This was supposed to be a wallflower girl with few friends and no boyfriend, essentially, ever. But Keri was so flabbergastingly funny and skilled that it somehow superseded her looks and made us believe this girl could be this way because *she* didn't realise how pretty she was."

Any good? Coming in the wake of *My So-Called Life* and airing alongside *Dawson's Creek* on the WB in the US, *Felicity* offered far less cynical drama than its network sibling, and benefited from Russell's bright-eyed central turn.

Our rating: ★★★★★



Making hair-story

Friends had 'The Rachel', but when Keri Russell cut her hair on *Felicity*, it sent shockwaves through popular culture. Here are the top five times TV shows referenced the 'do...

FAMILY GUY

Chris reveals he was bullied at school when Felicity cut her hair, because his curly mop more than slightly resembled Felicity's new bob. Poor Chris.

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

In season four episode 'Where The Wild Things Are', a girl snips off all her hair, prompting Xander (Nicholas Brendon) to comment: "People are going all Felicity with their hair."

GILMORE GIRLS

"Suddenly, I'm Felicity without the hair issues!" moaned Paris (Liza Weil), facing the dilemma of whether or not she should go to Princeton with her bf.

SABRINA THE TEENAGE WITCH

Sabrina (Melissa Joan Hart) gets so angry about the reaction to her newspaper expose, she fumes: "Why is everyone looking at me like I'm the girl who told Felicity to cut her hair?"

ONE TREE HILL

"Nice job, Felicity," Lucas (Chad Michael Murray) told Keith (Craig Sheffer) in season two's 'The Desperate Kingdom Of Love', the latter having shorn off his locks.

PART TWO 2001 - 2005

“In my heart long-term serialised storytelling is what I love. To see [*Lost*] be part of a wave of storytelling that proves that serialised television can function is the thing that is most exciting because I don’t know if I could ever do a show that was primarily a more procedural, less evolving story.”



2001 - 2005

BAD ROBOT

Founded by J.J. Abrams in 2001, Bad Robot Productions has grown to become one of Hollywood's biggest manufacturers of sizzling genre TV and movies...

WORDS **JOSH WINNING**

Bad Robot is synonymous with secrets. Over the course of its 14-year run, the California-based production company has become the bane of spoiler hounds, snapping the lid tight on its box of movie secrets, and keeping its increasingly high-profile projects under wraps right up to release.

Sometimes, that means extreme measures. "I'm working on the *Star Wars* script today and the people in my office have covered up all my windows with black paper," co-founder J.J. Abrams told *The Daily Telegraph* in 2014. "I guess they wanted to make sure no one could see what I was doing... It seems rather extreme."

Given the huge public interest in the company's stellar output – *Star Trek*, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, *Cloverfield* – it seems extreme measures are what it takes these days to ensure audiences aren't spoiled before they

set foot in the cinema. There's a certain amount of anticipation that comes with every Bad Robot release. For all its secrecy, though, the company's office is a surprisingly unassuming building in Santa Monica, California. Those who've been inside the three-storey, 18,000-square-foot space have described it as a treasure trove of movie memorabilia.

Old movie posters hang on the walls. Every office contains geeky toys and the hallways are dotted with movie props. It is, as you'd expect of a company in love with genre fare, a nerd utopia to rival the offices of the equally geeky Pixar. Founded in 2001 by Abrams and Bryan Burk, Bad Robot was central to establishing Abrams as a key player in Hollywood. He'd already spent a decade writing scripts (*Taking Care Of Business*, *Regarding Henry*), working as a script doctor (*Armageddon*) and launching his own TV show (*Felicity*), but Bad Robot gave him a base and a team.

The Bad Robot logo first appeared in front of Abrams' second TV series, spy drama *Alias*. Set against storm clouds, the logo shows an old-school red robot zipping through long grass while children shout "Bad robot!" Abrams came up with the company name while in a writer's meeting, and the robot itself was inspired by a character Abrams had created for an as-yet-unproduced children's book. As for the kids crying "Bad robot!", they're Abrams own, Henry and Gracie.

He recalls: "That day in the office while editing, I put together sound effects on my computer, burned a QuickTime movie on a CD, gave it to post-production, and three days later it was on national television."

That was just the beginning. Since the company's inception, it's gone from strength to strength. In box office figures alone, it's making the kind of money that would turn other studios green with envy. Though 2001's



Joy Ride made just \$36m on its \$21m budget, by 2011, *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* hit the payload with \$694m worldwide. And *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is sure to eclipse that entirely.

Three decades on from cleaning up 8mm prints for his idol, Steven Spielberg, Abrams' passion for storytelling hasn't dimmed any, and he's built the Bad Robot empire on people who are similarly enamoured with genre fare.

"We have some of the most amazing people working here, and the amazing thing about this building is the unbelievably inspiring intersection of art and technology," says Ben Rosenblatt, producer of *Super 8*, *Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol* and *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. "There's the editing rooms, the theatre, the music room, the art room, our visual effects operation, sound edit rooms. We're able to do all of that in one place. What that means for J.J. is total efficiency."

And with Bad Robot co-producing the next *Star Wars* (alongside Walt Disney Pictures), the company is only set to get bigger. Though Abrams ended up filming *Episode VII* in the UK, pre- and post-production remained in Santa Monica. But producing a movie the sheer size of *Star Wars* meant some unavoidable changes to the Bad Robot offices, with the HQ adding a green room and sound studios just to accommodate the *Episode VII* production.

Keeping it in-house has some benefits, too, particularly when it comes to Bad Robot's now-famous ability to keep secrets. "I've read more comments than I ever expected where people say, 'Don't spoil it for me, don't show me everything, don't ruin the story...' and I'm always grateful for that," Abrams has said of *The Force Awakens*. "So it's a little bit of a tightrope, and we want to make sure we're being forthcoming, but that we're not spoiling." Which, after all, has always been the Bad Robot way.

Bad Robot Productions

What's come out – and what's to come – from J.J.'s production co...

Films

Joy Ride (2001)
Mission: Impossible III (2006)
Cloverfield (2008)
Star Trek (2009)
Morning Glory (2010)
Super 8 (2011)
Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol (2011)
Star Trek Into Darkness (2013)
Infinitely Polar Bear (2014)
Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation (2015)
Star Wars: The Force Awakens (2015)
Star Trek Beyond (2016)
Valencia (2016)

TV

Alias (2001 - 06)
Lost (2004 - 10)
The Catch (2005)
What About Brian (2006 - 07)
Six Degrees (2006 - 07)
Fringe (2008 - 13)
Anatomy Of Hope (2009)
Undercovers (2010)
Person of Interest (2011 - present)
Alcatraz (2012)
Shelter (2012)
Revolution (2012 - 14)
Almost Human (2013 - 14)
Believe (2014)
Dead People (2015)
Westworld (2016)
Roadies (2016)



J.J. Fact File
Alias (2001 - 2006)



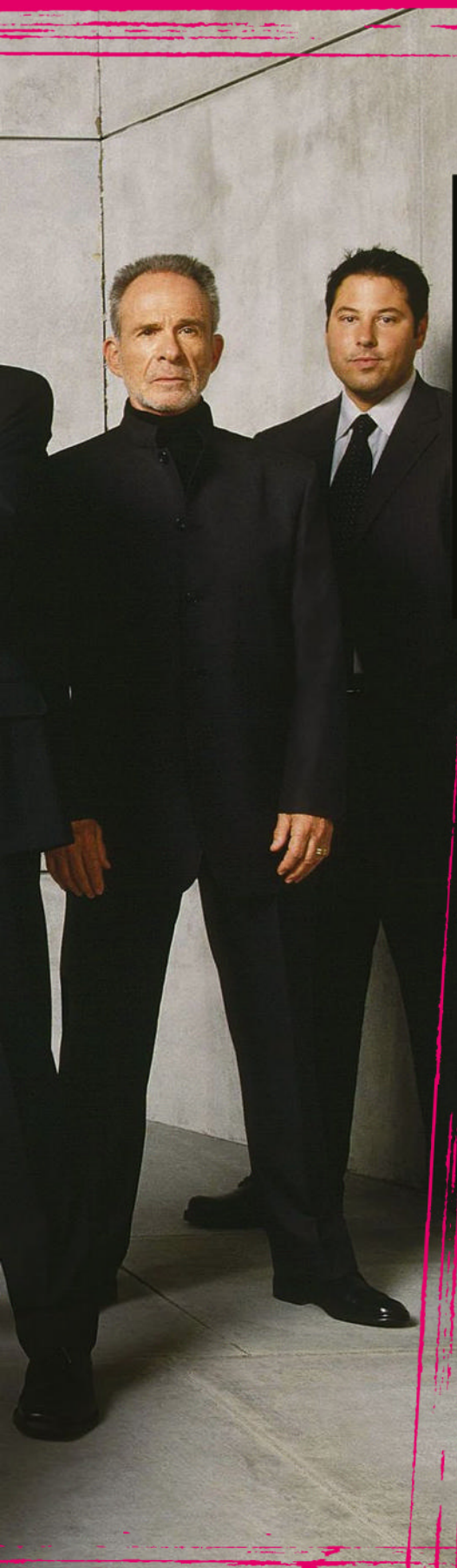
What? Twisty-turny spy series following Sydney Bristow, a CIA double agent with an impressive wig collection.

Who? Jennifer Garner, Ron Rifkin, Carl Lumbly, Michael Vartan.

J.J.'s role? Abrams came up with the show's premise, and wrote and directed the pilot episode. He also oversaw the show's entire five-year run as exec producer.

Any good? You'll need to take notes as you go to keep up with the show's ever-shifting plot, but that's just part of *Alias*'s brilliance. Never staying still for long, it constantly wrong-foots expectations, and features a fantastic heroine in Jennifer Garner's chameleonic spy.

Our rating: ★★★★★



ALIAS

J.J. Abrams' second TV show swapped the small-town drama of *Felicity* for A-grade spy thrills, and birthed one of the small screen's greatest heroines...

WORDS: **JOSH WINNING**

Once upon a time there was a college student who was offered a job at SD-6, a division of the CIA. Only it wasn't part of the CIA, it was part of an organised crime syndicate called The Alliance of Twelve. When the girl learned the truth, she agreed to work for the real CIA as a mole within The Alliance – alongside her estranged father, who happened to be doing exactly the same thing already.

Now, pay attention, because after that it gets complicated – and more than a little bit silly. For five years, Jennifer Garner played super-spy Sydney Bristow in *Alias*, a show that boasted more twists than an open audition for *Oliver!* The contagiously OTT spy series from J.J. Abrams spent half a decade tying itself into knots of ever-increasing complexity with all its double

>>

Deceived into working for organised crime while thinking you're in the CIA: we've all done it, right?



2001 - 2005

Victor Garber, Michael Vartan, Jennifer Garner and Lena Olin sticking to a colour scheme.



Rachel Nichols as Rachel Gibson, the agent intended to replace Sydney in series five.



crosses, triple crosses, moles, clones, traitors, agencies-within-agencies, and enough preposterous resurrections and secret family ties to keep a daytime soap going for decades.

"I had just gotten a fix of doing sci-fi stuff, which was a blast," Abrams told *Nerdist* about the show's inception. Having worked as a script doctor on *Armageddon*, the young creative had already stepped into TV with popular drama *Felicity* (see page 29) – but there was a problem. "It was a very sweet story that literally had no stakes whatsoever," he says. "It was so hard because when you got to episode three, you're like, 'Um...' There were no bad guys, there were no monsters..."

How to fix that? "I pitched: 'What if *Felicity* were a spy?'" Abrams recalls of a meeting with ABC. Given the go-ahead by the TV studio, Abrams got busy. "I put the *Run Lola Run* soundtrack on and I listened to it non-stop and wrote the *Alias* pilot to that score and I turned it in. They said, 'Who do you want to direct it?' and I heard myself say, 'Me,' and they said, 'OK.'"

RENAISSANCE WOMAN

Debuting on 30 September 2001, the show started out comparatively simply, with Sydney leading a triple life as a fake bank employee, fake CIA agent (for the bad guys), and real mole (for the good guys). Well, it was simple compared with quantum physics, though

"J.J. has helped make Alias a family for me. I'd keep coming back for him as long as he wants"

JENNIFER GARNER



perhaps not when compared to your typical episode of *Dangermouse*. Then along came Milo Giacomo Rambaldi, the 15th century Vatican architect whose ground-breaking secret technologies were the obsession of Arvin Sloane (Ron Rifkin), Sydney's boss at the evil fake CIA.

An odd amalgam of Nostradamus and Leonardo da Vinci, Rambaldi conceived of early versions of the mobile phone, the transistor radio and – most relevantly to the show's warring factions – the neutron bomb. But Rambaldi didn't stop there. He also prophesied the coming of a woman – who may or may not be Sydney Bristow – who would bring about the destruction of the world's greatest power.

Then there was Sydney's mother Irina (played by Lena Olin), who returned from the dead to reveal she was a KGB spy turned master criminal, who then became a CIA agent before going rogue, getting cloned, getting kidnapped by her evil Rambaldi-obsessed sister and disappearing again. And there was Sydney's half-sister Nadia (Mía Maestro), daughter of Arvin Sloane, who also worked for an evil intelligence agency that she thought was good, and who was also mentioned in the prophecies of Rambaldi, and who was raised by Sydney's aforementioned evil aunt, who poisoned Nadia and tried to destroy the world. Or something. And even that's only scratching the surface.

Packed with twists and turns, the show occasionally came under fire for its complicated plotting, with ABC stepping in and demanding *Alias* be less serialised in its final three years. "I think the show suffered for it," Abrams admits of that switch. Still, he remained an important part of production, despite the fact that – over the show's five-year run – his career took off hugely. "It's J.J.," Garner said in 2005 of the reason she wanted to keep making *Alias* for as long as possible. "He has helped make *Alias* a family for me.



Jennifer Garner in one of the show's many, many (many) wigs.

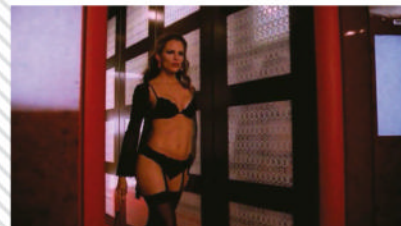
"I'd keep coming back for him as long as he wants and [as long as] there's an audience for the show."

Between motherhood and movie stardom, Garner wasn't expected to stay if the show made it to a sixth season, though, which is why *Alias*' fifth and final season introduced a host of new agents, including Renée Rienne (Élodie Bouchez), Thomas Grace (Balthazar Getty), and the new Sydney, Rachel Gibson (*G.I. Joe*'s Rachel Nichols). Like Sydney and Nadia, Rachel worked for an evil organisation that she thought was the good guys. She wasn't quite as kick-ass as Sydney, though, and with the confirmation that *Alias* would end with season five, the new guys only got one season to shine.

But the show's legacy lives on. It nabbed Garner a Golden Globe in 2002 (for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series) and a string of Emmy nominations, and inspired Tom Cruise to give Abrams a shot at that considerably larger spy franchise, *Mission: Impossible*. Meanwhile, almost a decade after the show ended, Sydney remains Abrams' favourite character.

"She was a character with a secret, and that is always a fun place to start," he told *The New York Times* in 2013. "But she wasn't a superhero; she was terrified at almost every step. But still, she would do the right thing. I think we would all like to believe we would behave like that when the going gets rough."

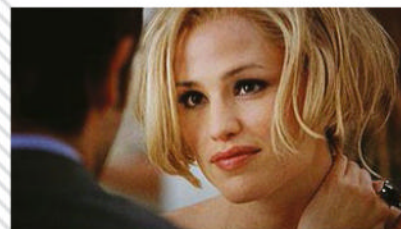
Top 5 episodes



2.13 'Phase One'

Sloane disappears, while Sydney may have discovered a way to bring The Alliance down for good.

1



2.22 'The Telling'

Sydney must team up with her mother to take out Sloane. But then there's that shocker of a cliffhanger...

2



1.17 'Q&A'

Sydney's brought in for questioning by the FBI, which threatens to blow her cover. Can Jack and Vaughn figure out a way to get her out in time?

3



3.11 'Full Disclosure'

FBI Special Officer Kendall (Terry O'Quinn) reveals what happened during the two year period Sydney has no memory of.

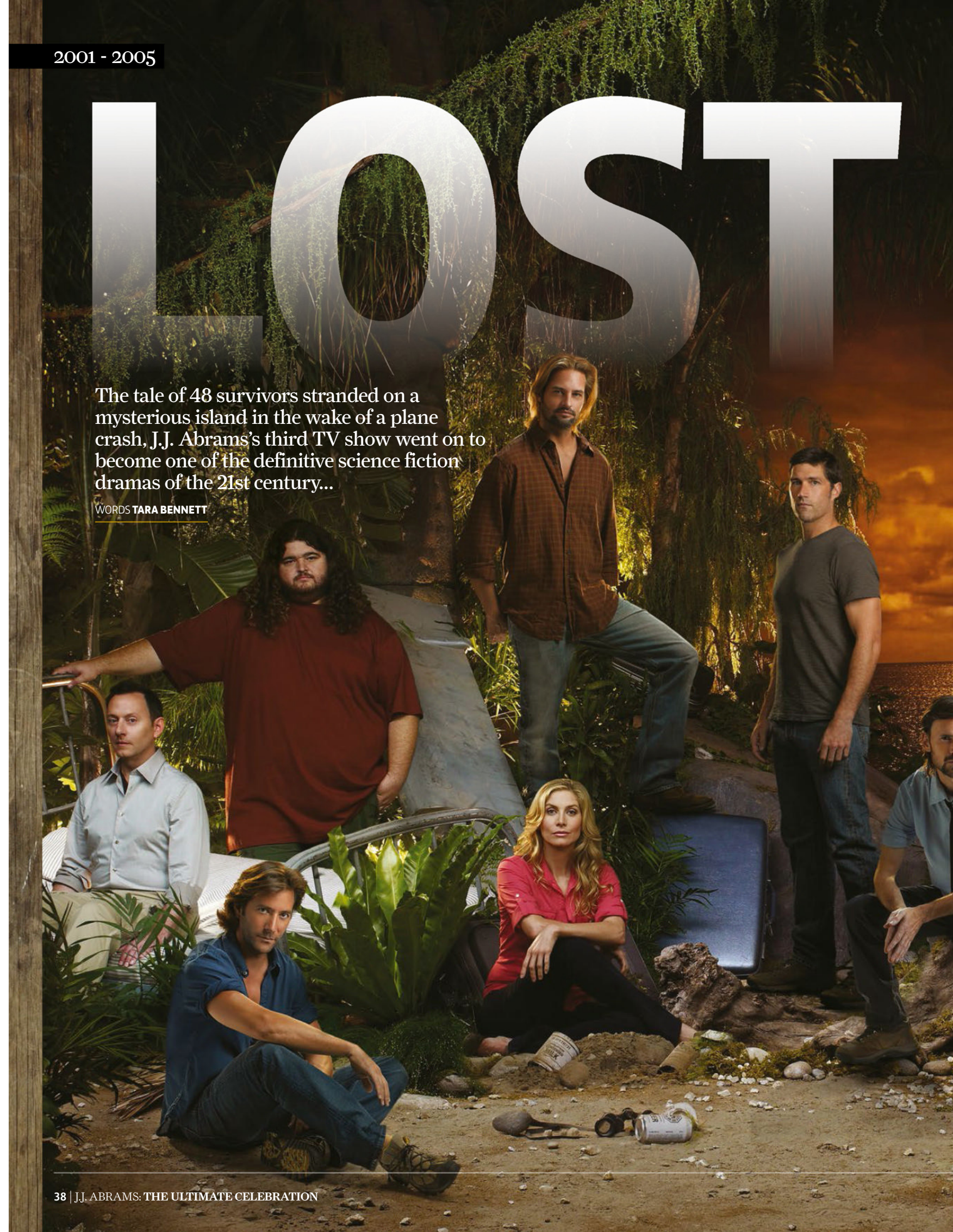
4



4.22 'Before The Flood'

Zombies are everywhere thanks to the powers of a giant red ball called the Circumference. Sydney and co head to Russia to save the day.

5



2001 - 2005

LOST

The tale of 48 survivors stranded on a mysterious island in the wake of a plane crash, J.J. Abrams's third TV show went on to become one of the definitive science fiction dramas of the 21st century...

WORDS **TARA BENNETT**

38 | J.J. ABRAMS: THE ULTIMATE CELEBRATION

The tale of 48 survivors stranded on a mysterious island in the wake of a plane crash, J.J. Abrams's third TV show went on to become one of the definitive science fiction dramas of the 21st century...

J.J. Fact File

Lost (2004 - 2010)



What? Sci-fi drama in which survivors of a plane crash attempt to stay alive on a desert island.

Who? Evangeline Lilly, Naveen Andrews, Emilie de Ravin, Matthew Fox, Jorge Garcia, Maggie Grace, Josh Holloway, Daniel Dae Kim.

J.J.'s role? Abrams co-created the series with *Alias* buddy Damon Lindelof, and directed its two-part pilot. He exec produced the entire run.

Any good? Easily one of the most inventive TV shows of the noughties, *Lost* blends character drama with savvy genre chills to create something entirely unique. It can't quite sustain the mystery over the whole six years, but it gives it a good go nevertheless.

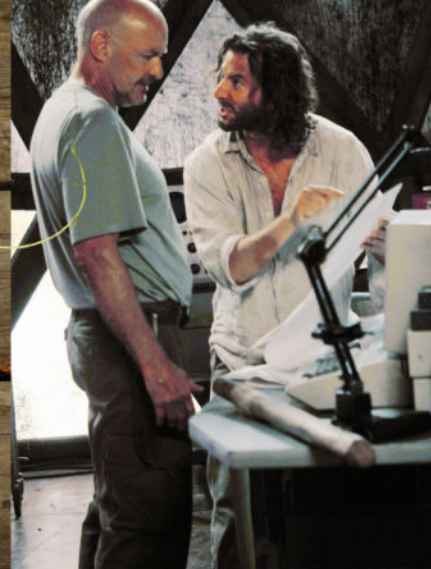
Our rating: ★★★★★



2001 - 2005



Evangeline Lilly and Matthew Fox play everyone's favourite off-on castaway couple.



The fourth episode of the first season reveals the history of the enigmatic John Locke with an astoundingly effective twist





What influenced *Lost* and what *Lost* influenced

Taking its cues from the best of genre TV before it, *Lost*'s own impact is still being felt now.

Influenced by...



Buffy The Vampire Slayer

Damon Lindelof says that Joss Whedon's show was his model, combining self-contained stories with season-long story arcs. He also nabbed one of *Buffy* and *Angel*'s top scribes, David Fury.



The Prisoner

For *Rover*, read the *Others*; for the *Village*, read the *Island*; and *The Prisoner*'s wilful perversity is echoed by *Lost*'s multi-layered density.

Has influenced...

Supernatural, Invasion, Threshold, Surface, etc

The 2004 autumn season boasted one genre show: *Lost*. 2005's autumn offered half a dozen. And Shaun Cassidy, the man behind ABC's *Invasion*, says the reason was: "*Lost, Lost, Lost.*"

Podcasts and videocasts

Lost coincided more or less with Apple's creation of the Video iPod, and the two became natural partners for download-savvy iTunes users, with the show available at \$1.99 a pop. There were also official show podcasts available, to keep you in the loop.

In the history of television, there's never been anything quite like *Lost*. Movie-quality production values meshed with meaty character drama and the kind of complicated backstory beloved of smaller-scale cult shows to create something unique. For those who wanted romance and relationships, there was plenty of substance, and those who delighted in top-drawer sci-fi were also catered for. The brainchild of J.J. Abrams and Damon Lindelof, the series boasted no ass-kicking spies or weeping collegiates. Instead, it revolved around a bunch of seemingly average people who survive a horrendous plane crash and are left stranded on a remote island in the South Pacific.

While the concept was ever so slightly retro-familiar (*Gilligan's Island*, anyone?), this show had no fading movie stars or blustery skippers with a little buddy always getting into trouble. No, *Lost* quickly proved it was something altogether different. The powerhouse pilot revealed a serious drama about 48 survivors dealing with the day-to-day aftermath of the crash, while also utilising an engaging flashback format that explored the mysterious pre-flight lives of 14 of the castaways, each with their own closet full of secrets just waiting to be revealed.

As if that wasn't tempting enough, Abrams and Lindelof got sneaky by populating the island with one hell of a menacing, but unseen, 'monster' as well as some seriously out of place rampaging polar bears. Jaded industry hacks expected sceptical viewers to shriek, "What the

hell is this?" and change channel en masse. Instead, genre geeks and mainstream audiences bonded over the unique premise and *Lost* became a television phenomenon.

Working in Los Angeles, Abrams, Lindelof and the writing staff created the episodes, while their cast and crew played on the shores of Oahu, Hawaii filming the series. Strangely enough, the writers aren't bitter about that when we meet them back in 2005, despite their pasty pallors. They're actually more focused on the prospect of hooking the rest of the world on their crazy island with the very pretty, but messed up castaways.

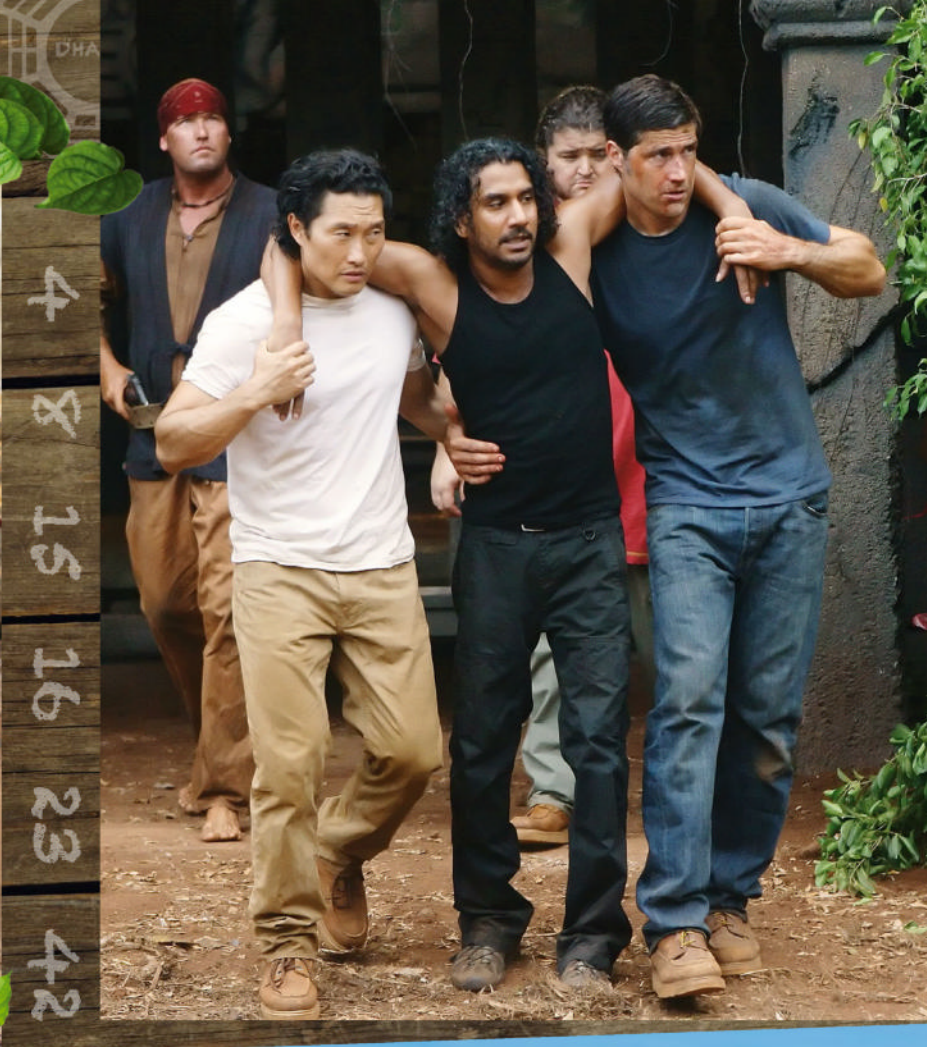
TELLING TALES

"The thing that is most exciting is that something that felt weird and really appealing to us was actually received at all, let alone widely," Abrams says about the show's success. "In my heart, long-term, serialised storytelling is what I love and all I've been told for the last few years is you have to stop it. On *Felicity*, 'Do standalone episodes.' On *Alias*, 'Do standalone episodes.' On *Lost*, 'It won't work.' It's the thing >>



Sayid (Naveen Andrews) with the doomed Shannon (Maggie Grace).

2001 - 2005



Survivors pick their way out of the crashed plane in the pilot episode.



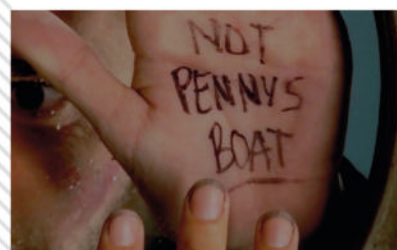
Top 5 episodes



- 1 1.18 "NUMBERS"**
We find out why Hurley's so freaked out by those numbers.



- 2 2.07 "THE OTHER 48 DAYS"**
Lest we forget, Oceanic Flight 815 had even more survivors. This is their story.



- 3 3.22 and 23 "THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS"**
Two-partner which sees the survivors preparing to tackle the Others. Peril! Death! Flashbacks!



- 4 4.05 "THE CONSTANT"**
Trouble with time travel as Desmond becomes 'unstuck in time' between 1996 and 2004.



- 5 6.15 "ACROSS THE SEA"**
Three eps before the very end, we finally get the backstory of Jacob and The Man In Black.



William Mapother
as the dangerous
Dr. Ethan Rom.



I love and what Damon loves. To see it actually be part of a wave of storytelling that proves that serialised television can function is the thing that is most exciting, because I don't know if I could ever do a show that was primarily a more procedural, less evolving story."

While Abrams and Lindelof co-wrote the pilot, they admit the actual plan for the first season was hazy at best. "A lot of it has just been figuring it out," Lindelof admits. "I think that what we thought the show was when we first started and what the show has become is the most exciting part of the process. What I think is so great about *Lost* is that it's really organic. The writers are coming up with ideas in LA and sending scripts to Hawaii, which are then getting translated by the actors there. Then the writers are watching the dailies from the episodes and are feeding off of that process. It's become this thing where we really listen to the show and what it wants to be, because it's very intimidating. It's serialised, in the past as well as the present. It's got genre elements, which are very intimidating to mainstream audiences. How do you do a sci-fi show without it being a sci-fi show? How do you

tonally shift between something that can be very serious, life or death, and something that can be a little more lyrical, fanciful and funny at times too?

"I think 'Walkabout' was a big episode for the show," he continues. The fourth episode of the first season reveals the history of the enigmatic John Locke (Terry O'Quinn) with an astoundingly effective twist. "I had to fight a lot of people to have the twist be what it was. People were very scared by it and felt it labelled the show in certain ways. They didn't understand it and they weren't okay not understanding it. I feel like what makes *Lost* cool is that people can watch the show and there is something to talk about afterwards. You can interpret things through the prism of your own personal experience. If you are religious, you can say a miracle occurred. If you are an atheist, you can say it was all in [Locke's] head. Seeing that moment and seeing it work and seeing Terry O'Quinn doing what he did, and David [Fury] writing such a beautiful script, that was an example very early on after the pilot, where I realised it was going to work."



Confronted by the
Smoke Monster.



2001 - 2005



Everlasting love with Jin (Daniel Dae Kim) and Sun (Yunjin Kim).



Writer and supervising producer Javier Grillo-Marxuach offers that *Lost* also taps into some universal concepts. "Everybody fantasises about what records you'd take to a desert island or who you would want to be stranded on a desert island with. If nothing else, people identify with it because it's a thought exercise that everybody has done at least once in their life. I think that's one of the things that makes the show successful and universal. It's an immediate gateway into the show that I think everyone can access, whatever the language the

show is in. We also have a very international cast. It's not a show full of white Anglo-Saxon Protestant castaways. It's much more universal and it's reflected in the casting and the types of stories we tell." He also admits their creative approach allows them to get away with things other shows can't. "We need to make the best show, the best characters, and the stories, the best that we can. If you see a story that is well put together and well connected and you can make an emotional bond with it, you get into it no matter who or what is in it."

Like pilot-eating monsters or creepy jungle voices or apparitions of dead relatives – all elements that would be impossibly hard to swallow on another show, but not on *Lost*. Executive producer and showrunner Carlton Cuse admits, "It's a subversive genre show. If it were completely genre, it wouldn't attract 18 million people. I'm more focused on the character side and I think that's the draw for the much larger audience, but we've managed



Ben (Michael Emerson) turns the Island wheel...

Though its final episode proved controversial with hardcore fans, there's no denying its huge impact



Jeremy Davies played Daniel Faraday who, like most of the characters, had some interesting parent issues.



to walk the line of satisfying both audiences. We've also been very conscious about not frustrating the audience with a lot of the questions of the show. I learned lessons from shows like *Twin Peaks* and *The X-Files*, where I became frustrated when no answers were dished out. We answer a lot of questions at the end of the season. But the larger over-arching mysteries, like what is the nature of the island and what is the monster, those are not things we are giving away easily!"

GENRE-BENDING

Lindelof adds, "Our approach is the *Close Encounters* approach, which has Richard Dreyfuss in his truck and the radio gets screwy and he looks out the window and gets a sunburn. You don't know what the hell happened, but at the end of the movie, it's full on spaceships landing and aliens coming out! You need to take the journey to get there and I feel that's what *Lost* is. Anyone who watches knows by now that things are happening on that island that have no rational explanation within the world of science. Hopefully, we've

trickled it out in such a way that people are now hooked into the characters as much as they are in what is this mystery of the island. A polar bear is not genre and an island is not genre, but when you put them together, it's now genre," he smiles.

As for characters, Lindelof says they are the real reason the show is such a success. From heroic doctor Jack (Matthew Fox) and charming but dangerous Kate (Evangeline Lilly), all the way down to sexy Sawyer (Josh Holloway) and troubled kid Walt (Malcolm David Kelley), the cast has a chemistry that quickly becomes addictive. "I love the eclectic characters on the show," Lindelof enthuses. "The fact that people hated Jin (Daniel Dae Kim) for 15 episodes and then we showed you his history to try and understand this guy a little better and suddenly he started popping. The same with Sawyer, for the first five episodes people just thought he was belligerent and a dick, then they began to understand why he was the way he was. Our mission statement was to make heroes out of our villains and villains out of our heroes and we've been successful with that."

Cuse concurs. "I'm very locked into these characters and it's exciting seeing what an actor brings to the character," he says. "Once you see how relationships play out on screen that works as a springboard for what we can do. For me, the Jack and Locke relationship has been really important. The interesting overlap and similarities between those characters is intriguing. They both have serious father issues and in many ways I liken them to two magnets. They both have a plus and a minus end and they sometimes repel and attract, but they are similar in more ways than they are different."

Lasting for six seasons (that's an impressive 121 episodes) and going out with a bang in 2010, *Lost* remains one of the most-loved sci-fi shows ever made. It nabbed just about every big TV award (Emmys, Golden Globes, Screen Actors Guild), and has made an indelible mark on the television landscape. Though its final episode proved controversial with hardcore fans, there's no denying its huge impact. "I loved the ending," Abrams says. "I thought it definitely provided an emotional conclusion to that show."

Shrek

It's not easy being green.

When? 2001.

What? Tongue-in-cheek CGI fantasy. Big green ogre Shrek goes on a quest to rescue Princess Fiona from a fire-breathing dragon, encountering fairytale characters along the way.

Who? Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, John Lithgow.

J.J.'s role? As a recent graduate in 1994, Abrams was hired by DreamWorks head honcho Jeffrey Katzenberg to help develop animation techniques in prep for a *Shrek* film. Along with three other young filmmakers (who called themselves The Propellerheads), Abrams worked on the film for months before it was shut down by Katzenberg. It was only when director Andrew Adamson came on board that the film finally got made, by which point Abrams had moved on.

Any good? While it's not the relentless joke-flinger it could have been, and the plot could have done with a few more set-pieces, the combination of amazing (yet restrained) animation and perfectly toned voice-performances ensures DreamWorks' second CG-movie is a worthy follow-up to *Antz*.

Our rating: ★★★★★

Mike Myers re-recorded all his lines as Shrek after deciding to use a Scottish accent.



Steve Zahn, Leelee Sobieski and Paul Walker learn not to mess around with people they meet on CB radio.

© Kobal/12

Joy Ride

Duel meets Fast & Furious in a gasoline-soaked thriller...

When? 2001.

What? Three friends on a road trip to New Jersey are terrorised by a psychotic trucker in this psychological thriller.

Who? Paul Walker, Matthew Kimbrough, Leelee Sobieski, Steve Zahn.

J.J.'s role: Co-writing the script with Clay Tarver, Abrams envisioned *Joy Ride* as a tribute to Steven Spielberg's debut, *Duel*, and there are plenty of nods back to that film throughout. Bad Robot Productions co-produced the film with 20th Century Fox.

J.J. says: "I love combining genres, taking these small intimate stories and combining them with something you wouldn't normally expect. With *Joy Ride*, we were trying to do that, trying to tell a story you might want to watch in a horror genre picture."

Any good? Lovingly embracing its B-movie trappings, this is a tightly wound thriller that constantly wrong-foots expectations. Fantastic set-pieces, and Zahn gives a great performance as a goofball running scared.

Our rating: ★★★★★



PART THREE 2006 - 2009

“My goal was not to make a movie only for the fans. It was to make a movie for movie-goers and people who enjoy characters that make you feel and situations that are exciting.”



MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III

A billion-dollar franchise. A sequel six years in the works. An action epic that nearly blew up. How Tom Cruise and J.J. Abrams finally completed their impossible mission...

WORDS **TONY HORKINS**

J.J. Fact File

Mission: Impossible III (2006)



What? IMF agent Ethan Hunt returns for his most personal mission yet, taking down a dangerous arms dealer.

Who? Tom Cruise, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Ving Rhames, Billy Crudup, Michelle Monaghan.

J.J.'s role? After David Fincher and Joe Carnahan failed to make the threequel, Abrams stepped in to both write and direct.

Any good? Cynics might smirk at the *True Lies* riff, but this is the best of the first three films: a shameless, breathless blizzard of whizz and bang.

Our rating: ★★★★★

It almost never happened. The fuse had been lit twice – and then extinguished. Directors and writers had come and gone and a TV brand Tom Cruise had turned into a formidable film franchise was slowly losing its cool. Bumped and then

bumped again from its release date, *M:I:III* appeared to have been replaced in Cruise's affections by any collaboration with Steven Spielberg (his *War Of The Worlds* replaced it as Paramount's summer 2005 tentpole). *Mission: Impossible* was living up to its name. Then Cruise met J.J. Abrams, and the man they call Ethan Hunt rediscovered his mojo...

"We just clicked," recalls Cruise, who first met the director at a Hollywood party, where he blagged some *Alias* DVDs. "That show, man," he says. "I started watching one episode and about four days later I'd seen the whole first season! It's great producing, great directing, great writing and great storytelling on every level." He's looking healthy and lively and toothy and, you know, very Tom Cruise. And he's carrying a gun. A very big gun...

It's September 2005 and we're standing with Cruise on a Los Angeles location as the >>



2006 - 2009



Jonathan Rhys Meyers plays Declan, part of Ethan Hunt's new team.



The set is guarded by cake-necked security guards, mindful of hundreds of hysterical Chinese fans taking pictures of the action

crew bustle around, readying another setup on the \$150-million production. Carnage surrounds us: overturned cars, ruins and rubble, the result of a missile attack perpetrated by the dastardly Philip Seymour Hoffman. The gun clutched tightly in Cruise's hand is about to see some... "ACTION!" Cruise bolts into shot. A helicopter tears through the sky. The star sprints, leaps, stumbles, climbs onto a car and sprays lead... but to no avail. "You're out of bullets and you didn't hit the chopper," shouts Abrams from behind the camera, reminding Cruise of the context of the shot. "They've gone and you're frustrated!"

And probably a little lucky. Earlier in the day, we witnessed the spectacular central stunt from this key 'bridge sequence' action set-piece; a stunt which suggests a level of peril which any man, even 'super spy' Hunt (a man who escaped intact from a John Woo actioner, after all), would be extremely fortunate to survive. A mammoth, 16-wheeler truck raced down the bridge, aiming for a gap between an iron barrier and some wrecked cars – a rock and a hard place. It didn't make it. The flip, the flight, the sight of a 20-tonne vehicle gliding through the air will stay with us for a long time, never mind the fact that it was closely followed by a chopper whizzing by with the bear-like Hoffman glowering out.

Two months later, we've swapped continents, but are still with Cruise. In

Shanghai. Well, a small village just outside Shanghai. The set is guarded by cake-necked security guards, mindful of hundreds of hysterical Chinese fans taking pictures of the action from their bedroom windows. It is a very small village. And they're getting quite a show. Cruise is in Action Man mode again, scampering across a stream and past a string of red lanterns, before sprinting into the distance, a camera tracking him the length of three football pitches.

SECRET AGENT MAN

"God, he's fast," mumbles the star's stunt double, who has, it must be said, had bugger-all to do all day. Standing idle even as a rooftop chase requires his famous twin to leap over buildings without a wire, the stuntman can only hug himself against the cold. Cruise feels no such chill. "I love to do my own stunts," he says, nipping over during a rare break in filming. "I do it because I want to entertain the audience and myself." With that, he claps a hand on our shoulder and strolls off towards an exercise bike, intending to keep limber before heading back to the action.

At lunch, Abrams sits down for a quick chat. "This whole scene was originally set in Tokyo," he says between mouthfuls. "But we've seen that city on screen every now and then. I was just fascinated by Shanghai – it looks like it's out of a science-fiction movie." And how is



Simon Pegg makes his debut as loveable tech Benji.



he finding the pressure of marshalling bloody enormous set-pieces on his feature-length directorial debut? “My dream was to take the spy movie genre and, while it would have mind-blowing action sequences, ensure it had intimacy and character-based story.” He pauses, perhaps aware of an unavoidable cliché. “To be honest, making *Mission: Impossible III* has been a dream come true.” Which is just as well, because its origin was something of a nightmare.

“The script wasn’t there and I’d already f*cked up one movie with a ‘3’ in the title,” says David Fincher, explaining why he passed on Cruise’s third mission, memories of *Alien³* still haunting him. The *Panic Room* director was Cruise’s original choice to helm the sequel, once he’d decided each instalment in the franchise should have a fresh director (a good move, given the lukewarm critical reaction to Woo’s *M:I-2*).

But pressure from Paramount to secure a May 2004 release date saw *Fight Club*’s genius drop out, deciding if he didn’t have time to do it properly, he’d rather not do it at all. Cruise/Wagner Productions quickly replaced him with Joe Carnahan, the young director whose bruising cop drama, *Narc*, they’d championed. The new *Mission* was to be hard-edged and murky. (An early, pre-9/11 script treatment was about a terrorist destroying famous international landmarks.) But then, in July 2003, unspecified ‘creative

differences’ saw Carnahan leave the project, mere weeks before production was due to start. Cruise and producing partner Paula Wagner flipped through the Rolodex. Soon, Abrams got the call. “I thought, ‘Why is Tom Cruise calling me? Am I in trouble?’” he laughs, sitting with us on the Paramount lot, three months after our sojourn in Shanghai. “It just seemed so surreal.”

ONE VISION

Surreal, and also somewhat tricky. For all his desire to work with Cruise, Abrams had one small problem: he didn’t like the script. “The screenplay Joe Carnahan was working to deal with issues that, in my opinion, were just too big and serious for *Mission: Impossible*,” he explains. “It was cool and incredibly dark, but it had an energy like *Narc*,” says Abrams. “It just wasn’t my version of *Mission: Impossible*.”

Which put him in a very awkward position. Here he was, a TV director (albeit critically acclaimed) being given the chance to work on one of Hollywood’s biggest franchises. But he didn’t want to direct the movie they had in mind. “I told Tom, ‘I get this, but it’s not my thing.’” He said, “Okay, let’s wait a year and do your thing.” Abrams is still clearly surprised at this good fortune. “I couldn’t believe it.” It wasn’t the only shock.

Despite the fact *Mission: Impossible* gives every outside impression of being a Cruise-controlled franchise, Abrams claims he felt astonishing freedom. He drafted in old friends and former *Alias* co-writers Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci to work on the script (the pair have worked with J.J. throughout his career, most recently on *Star Trek: Into Darkness*) and set about taking part three of the saga in a completely different direction.

“Just because it was *Mission: Impossible III*, just because it was Tom Cruise, that really wasn’t enough in terms of making this movie something I thought was worthwhile,” he says. “I wanted to do a story about a man who was a spy but who would come home and we’d see how that affected him as a person. How does a man live his life undercover? That for me was

“J.J. Abrams is just a brilliant, brilliant guy”

Simon Pegg on entering the fray...

What can you tell us about Benji?

I play this guy called Benjamin Dunn, who works at the IMF (Impossible Missions Force) as tech advisor. And I assist Tom when he needs me to.

So you’re having a good time with The Cruiser?

Yeah, yeah, we’ve got a couple of scenes together. We’ve got a really cool scene together actually... and I can’t say much about it! But I do get involved in the action a little bit. It’s really exciting.

What did you make of Tom?

I was genuinely taken with him. I thought he was a really great guy. Very easy-going, very normal. And not short and not weird! He was just really cool, very welcoming on-set to me. And also J.J. Abrams is just a f*cking brilliant, brilliant guy. *Jonathan Crocker*

the way in, telling the story not from a spy’s point of view, but from a man’s.”

Abrams insists Cruise didn’t pressure him to mould the third in a franchise around a specific formula. “The truth is Tom let me write the movie with the co-writers I wanted to write with, cast it the way I wanted to cast it, direct it the way I thought it should be directed, and cut the film too,” says Abrams, incredulity creeping back into his voice. “This is a guy that could micro-manage every aspect of this movie if he wanted to, but this was my movie and I got to do it with Tom Cruise! Every day I thought, ‘This has to be a joke – this is my first movie, why is he letting me do this?’” (Ask Cruise and you get a straight answer: “I already >>

2006 - 2009

Ving Rhames and a
briefcase... hopefully
this one isn't glowing.



*Patched together,
the sequence doesn't
so much drop your
jaw as throw it down
and stamp on it*

knew he had the ability to tell stories. So the first thing I said to him was, 'I want this film to be J.J. Abrams' *Mission: Impossible*. I depended on him entirely.'

Following the *M:I* formula, there's a striking ensemble backing up Cruise's above-the-title turn. Of Carnahan's original cast – which included Ving Rhames, Carrie-Anne Moss, Kenneth Branagh and Scarlett Johansson – only Rhames remains, returning as sidekick Luther Stickell. ('Scheduling conflicts' was the official



"Do you know what
that does? I don't
know what that does."



– and, to be fair, most likely – reason the others dropped out.) New players include Laurence Fishburne, Billy Crudup, Simon Pegg, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Keri Russell – star of *Felicity* – and, of course, Philip Seymour Hoffman, who embraced the chance to threaten and abuse Cruise.

"I don't know if I enjoy playing a villain more," says the *Capote* Oscar-winner, with a huge grin. "But it was certainly a lot of fun to let loose. You don't have to worry about your consonants too much!" The other key piece of casting was Michelle Monaghan, following up her breakthrough role in *Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang* and playing Ethan Hunt's fiancée, Julia Meade – a nurse who doesn't know her other half is an agent. "She thinks he works 'in transportation', but she begins to wonder if something else might be going on," explains Monaghan. "And in the course of the film she gets wrapped up in all the drama of the mission."

Monaghan – casually dressed in a sweater and jeans, her face free of make-up – comes across as extremely natural and likeable, something Cruise and Abrams were clearly drawn to. (Her "audition" was little more than a 20-minute chat with the pair in a room.) She also wasn't overwhelmed by the one-time 'Maverick', despite his iconic status. "Tom really is a normal guy," she says, without a hint of irony. "He certainly is Tom Cruise, and yes,



Felicity's Keri Russell plays Ethan's ex-protégé – but not for long.



we all know the legends and all of that, but he's really, really down to earth." Monaghan and Cruise's easy-going working relationship results in a convincing chemistry on screen, as we see when Abrams – who is still tinkering with the final edit – shows us some exclusive, completed clips of his impossible mission.

"To me, making this movie was all about showing the impact Ethan's job has on his personal life," he says, playing a scene in which Hunt is reunited with a worried Julia after a particularly trying trip. Taking in Cruise's "broken man" appearance, she finally begins to twig he's been dealing with rather more pressing matters than regional transit. It's a subtly powerful scene with minimal dialogue, which meets its aim, as Abrams says, to humanise Hunt.

BAD GUYS RULE

Character, clearly, is key. Abrams – who, with his big specs and bigger hair, looks like a nervous child at his school piano recital – cues up another clip. This one abandons subtlety for full-on fear, Hoffman chilling blood as he turns the tables on Hunt in a haunting interrogation. ("Do you have a wife, girlfriend? Whoever she is, I'm going to find her. Hurt her. And then I'm going to kill you, right in front of her.") "This is the first time Ethan Hunt has come up against an adversary this scary, this clever and this

mysterious," Abrams explains. "And Philip is just amazing in this movie..."

The final clip takes us back to the bridge in LA (actually Washington in the movie) and the flying truck. Patched together, the sequence doesn't so much drop your jaw as throw it down and stamp on it: exploding cars, diving planes, heat-seeking missiles, EAR-SPLITTING VOLUME. To use one of Cruise's favourite expressions, it rocks. But again, Abrams is focused on humanising the action. "I didn't want it to feel like he was in a war zone," he says. "And I didn't want it to be all slick and balletic. I just want you to feel what these people are going through."

The footage is impressive, and over its course Abrams has gone from scared kid to proud father who wants to reacquaint us with his new best buddy, Tom Cruise. The star bounds into the screening room like a caffeine-hyped puppy, chock full of enthusiasm. He's holding aloft a DVD of the new *M:I:III* trailer, which he says he's "just finished cutting." "It's just a rough cut," he says, as the screen flickers into life. "With rough pictures and rough sound." He needn't be nervous. The fresh trailer sends expectations through the roof. Cruise does his teary-eyed thing. Hoffman is terrifying. Things, like, BLOW UP. The sneak preview is not the only surprise Cruise has in store for us.

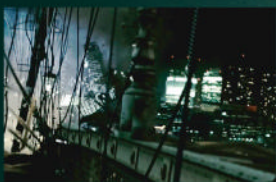
He disappears and returns clutching a CD. "It's the first mix of the theme song from Kanye West," he explains, before struggling with the CD player. "It's just a rough mix, he literally just finished it..."

A couple of awkward minutes ensue, with the technology resolutely refusing to play The West's 'down-with-the-kids' take on the iconic theme. Ironically, with the gadgets failing him – not very Ethan Hunt – Cruise finally has to hook up a Mac to play the track on iTunes, and tells us we have to listen to it twice as "it's so good". He then dances like only a 43-year-old white man can to a rap tune, but his enthusiasm is infectious.

The blockbuster success of *Mission: Impossible* funded his *Eyes Wide Shut* experiment with Stanley Kubrick. The Woo-hoo pyrotechnics of *M:I-2* meant he could take risks with *Vanilla Sky* and *Collateral*. With *M:I:III* you get a real sense that this is no calculated career move – no cash cow being milked to sustain his more diverse choices. He bloody loves it. "I had a total blast making this movie," he beams. Abrams looks from his star to the screen, which is still flashing a few scenes from his big-screen first-born. "My favourite movies, regardless of genre, are the ones that make me care about the characters," he muses. "That was the ambition – whether we got there or not is your call."

2006 - 2009

J.J. Fact File
Cloverfield (2008)



What? Found footage blockbuster about a monster in New York city.

Who? Odette Annable (as Odette Yustman), Michael Stahl-David, Lizzy Caplan, T.J. Miller.

J.J.'s role? With friend Matt Reeves on directing duties, J.J. co-produced opposite Bryan Burke.

Any good? With a brilliant viral marketing campaign, expectations were high. But annoying characters and a slightly underwhelming monster meant this wasn't the roaring success it could have been.

Our rating: ★★★

THERE GOES THE NEIGHBOUR HOOD!



Cloverfield took us all by surprise when the teaser trailers first hit the web. So just how did J.J. Abrams conceive this found-footage creature feature?

WORDS: JAMES WHITE

The film opens with crackly, shaky footage of a going away party for someone named Rob. Various friends and acquaintances wish him well and we're introduced to the man himself. But then everything changes. A huge boom is heard in the background, shaking the room and making the lights flicker. Partygoers scramble to the street to find out what happened and jaws slacken as a huge fireball lights up the New York skyline. Awe turns to fear and panic as debris rains down and then, as a final, destructive flourish, the decapitated head of the Statue of Liberty comes arcing down the street, thrown by something terrible, huge... and unseen.

That was the first glimpse of what is known as *Cloverfield*, the monster-flavoured brain >>

2006 - 2009

*“The camera is a participant.
It’s literally in the hands of
one of our characters”*

MATT REEVES

Taking liberties with
New York landmarks.



Cloverfield combines
guerilla filmmaking with
New York going kaboom.



candy produced by J.J. Abrams, working alongside *Lost* and *Buffy* writer Drew Goddard and *Felicity* director Matt Reeves. For months the three toiled in seclusion and then shot in secret, weaving a web of hype and excitement that would make '50s movie hypemeister William Castle chuckle in his coffin. So just how did they keep it so quiet – and exactly how do you go about making a massive monster mash with an indie sensibility?

CONCEPT CLOVERFIELD

While Abrams's name has been the big selling point (it was he who journeyed to San Diego Comic-Con to pump the hype handle) Reeves got involved at an early stage, back when Abrams and Goddard were still busily dreaming up the concept. Knowing that he wouldn't have the time to direct the thing himself, Abrams reached out to one of his regular collaborators and friends. "J.J. and me were planning to do a very different film together," says Reeves, as we found him putting the finishing touches to *Cloverfield*.

"I wrote a movie that I'm going to be directing that he's one of the producers on and we were talking about putting that together

and trying to figure out exactly when to go forward with that. And as that was happening, he was putting together this deal to make movies at Paramount and talking about his new company. He was really excited about these movies he wanted to make.

"One of the things he was telling me about was basically this monster movie – he described it as channelling *Godzilla* and *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*. And then Drew, who's a writer on *Lost*, got together with J.J. and they worked out the story and pitched it to the studio. J.J. is such an articulate and entertaining person that he knows how to make even just the essence of an idea sound like it's more complete than it is, because in his mind he's already got it all figured out. The studio executives jumped at it immediately. They said, 'Let's move forward and do this.' They had a release date based on a pitch. I know Drew came out of the meeting freaked out because he was saying, 'Wait a minute... that's all we have!' J.J., of course, was excited." Just don't ask Reeves to spill any details about the monster that Abrams had dreamed up – all of our requests for info and sly questions about Cthulu-alike nightmares

are slyly sidestepped with a chuckle and a "Sorry, no comment"...

The clock was ticking and they needed both a script and director, fast. Reeves was not the natural first choice for a film that would require big special effects and a scale he'd never before attempted. His experience was primarily with TV, his only movie credit being the comedy *The Pallbearer* (produced by J.J. but lacking in massive, marauding beast stomping Manhattan). "I read the outline and it seemed huge to me and I knew there was this plan to make it in a particular way. I was thinking it was a Roland Emmerich movie, crazy huge and they were, like, 'Yeah, it is...' I didn't understand. I've never done any visual effects prior to this and I was, like, 'why do you want me to do this?' Because all of the work that J.J. and I have done together has been on character-based stuff. J.J. said to me, 'It's because I know there are a lot of people who would come in here and have all kinds of takes on how to do the monster movie. But I know you will be concerned with the thing that matters the most, the character stuff.' And from then I was very intrigued."

Like a celluloid matchmaker, Abrams introduced Goddard to Reeves and the pair hit it off. Which was lucky, since the release date – and therefore the start of shooting – was dashing towards them. "We started talking about taking the characters in a certain direction and some kind of a love story. We moved forward with that – it's crazy – because there was no script but a date by which we had to be shooting. We had about three months of prep and spent the first eight weeks working on the story and talking about the places the story could go and working all of that out. And >>



Monster mashed

Live in Tokyo or New York?
You'd better have Giant
Creature insurance...



Godzilla, *Gojira* (1954)

City target: He's a traveller, but usually Tokyo.

Created: Man's arrogant tinkering with the atom births the big lad.

Appearance: Lizard-meets-dino sized horror with fire breath.

Body count: He usually destroys the cities he visits, so we're talking several million. But he's also been helpful in fighting other mutant monstoids.

Beast fact: Special effects master Eiji Tsuburaya saw the big G as a giant octopus before settling on his classic look.



Beast, *The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms* (1953)

City target: New York.

Created: Nuclear blast. This time from the Americans.

Appearance: Frickin' huge dinosaur with seemingly impervious hide.

Body count: Half of Manhattan, and hopefully the entire cast of *Sex And The City*.

Beast fact: The 40-foot dinosaur puppet was nicknamed Herman by the crew.



Kong, *King Kong* (1933)

City target: New York

Created: Skull Island seems to have a way with creating big beasts. We blame global warming, naturally.

Appearance: Ape. If apes came the size of J-Lo's ego.

Body count: 40. Surprisingly gentle despite his diet of ladies chained to posts and the soldiers/airmen he kills.

Beast fact: Director Merian Cooper and writer Ernest Schoedsack delved into their wrestling pasts to act out moves for the T-Rex/Kong rumble.



Gamera, *Giant Monster Gamera* (1965)

City target: Tokyo

Created: Nuclear explosion – he is a Godzilla rip-off, after all...

Appearance: Giant, fire-spewing mutant turtle with a yen (ha ha) for destroying towers and trying to avoid kids.

Body count: Tokyo's poor residents get it in the neck again.

Beast fact: As a nod to *Godzilla* studio Toho, Gamera destroys the New Toho Theatre during his rampage.



We hope you don't suffer from motion sickness...





Lizzy Caplan plays Marlena Diamond, one of the original partygoers.

Drew and I were meeting on the weekends because he was still on *Lost* and as all that craziness is happening, we decided that we really wanted to make a trailer to pique a little interest, a teaser, which was a really exciting thing considering how fast the movie was being made.”

Ah, the trailer. Exploding into cinemas, it sent shockwaves around the internet, particularly because no one saw it coming. “I’d say the biggest advantage was how quickly it all came together,” laughs Reeves. “By the time the trailer came out, we were already shooting and people didn’t know who was in the movie, didn’t know what we were doing and we had code names which changed every week, so we were able to keep under the radar. There was a point at the end of the shoot where so much attention had come to us because of the trailer, and our shoot in New York was at the end of the schedule, that when we got there, even though we’d changed our shoot title to *Cheese*, which seemed like the most innocuous thing

of all time, by about three hours into the first day of shooting, everybody knew who we were, what we were and what we were doing... Fortunately we only had a week left, so there was little to see,” laughs Reeves. “And the funny thing is because there was no script, instead of showing the crew the script or having a script that could end up on somebody’s coffee table and get taken and put on the net, I’d pitch the story daily to crew heads like the production designer as it was developing. I’d tell them which locations we need, which is insane. I’d never experienced that before. That was the fun of it.”

Reeves gathered a cast of largely unknown actors, and kicked off shooting in LA and New York, filming on the fly with a guerrilla-style attitude and using a variety of cameras, from hefty Viper digital devices (needed for the big effects) to the sort of camcorder you might find down at Comet. The ad hoc nature of the schedule and the style helped the director keep things real. “The scale of the movie meant it



was just insanity. The thing I always remember is that one of my favourite directors when I was growing up was Francis Ford Coppola and he would always be talking about how he always felt like the process through which the movie is made somehow informs the movie. So with *Apocalypse Now* the madness behind the scenes of that film was mirroring the battle of the war. And I kept reminding myself that even though *Cloverfield* was so chaotic and crazy I had to keep thinking, 'This is completely going to feed into the way the film is made, the way it looks and the way it feels.' And it's true: the craziness the characters go through in the course of the movie is in part the result of the conditions under which it was made." It was, in many ways, an intimate epic. "As much as it had this crazy scope, it was this complete indie film." The realism also came from the fact that many of the actors got to be camera operators, giving the resulting footage a natural feel, with inspiration coming from another sci-fi source with character on its mind.

"I was very taken with *Children of Men*, because even though the style didn't completely translate, what I loved about their approach was these continuous shots, the long shots, the documentary feel that gave some scenes a real kind of tension. But what I loved is the way the camera was so indifferent to what's going on around it. In our movie, the camera is a participant. It's literally in the hands of one of our characters who's going through this experience. If he falls, the camera falls. If he's terrified and he has to get out of the way, the camera has to do that. I knew that when we were doing this movie, it would be a whole new approach technically for all of us to undertake. We basically did a movie that, as our editor refers to it, takes in a huge scale but through a soda straw. Looking through this tiny little spot. When you point that soda straw at a giant monster, there's a giant monster on screen. But there are other moments where it's pointing down at a shoe, and other moments where it's pointing up at someone's face."

SET IN MOTION

Surely, though, with all that juddering, *Blair Witch*-style shooting, the director and his team were worried that audiences would end up with motion sickness? "I was never worried about it but we were conscious of it," explains Reeves. "Our movie has no Steadicam. The DP and I talked about it and we didn't want any. The movie's supposed to be coming from the point of view of one of these small consumer handy cams that weighs about a pound if that. And I felt like it was important that the camera display that lightness and have that point of view. Steadicam is so smooth and has a kind of floaty elegance. The moment we use that is the moment we give up the authenticity." A full on monster experience, but bring a bucket...

Don't believe the hype!

Five other great examples of movie marketing shtick



1

ID4

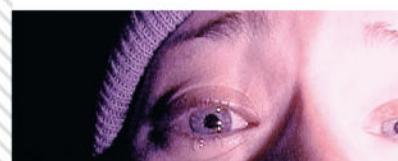
This alien invasion didn't invent the summer blockbuster, but its marketing certainly helped move it forward. A trailer with an exploding White House? Massive teaser posters with hovering ships and that short, catchy title? Winner.



2

The Phantom Menace

Yes, we know how it turned out. But no one can deny that the hype generators went on full speed, with the promise of teaser trailers getting fans into cinemas, only to skip the movies they were attached to.



3

The Blair Witch Project

BWP boasted one of the more successful purveyors of the "could it be real?" marketing hook. It also launched a new trend for online hype thanks to a savvy web campaign.



4

The Sixth Sense

M. Night Shyamalan might not be the next Hitchcock, but he knows his way around a twist ending. Back before his pet trick was passé, *The Sixth Sense* teased those who hadn't seen it.



5

The Matrix

"No one can tell you what the Matrix is... You have to see it for yourself." Even if you think the second and third entries are lousy, you can't deny that the Wachowskis knew what they were doing.

STAR TREK

A farmboy aimed for the stars as J.J. Abrams sought to make his *Star Trek* reboot the most spectacular and accessible sci-fi movie since, well, *Star Wars*.
It is a bold new enterprise...

WORDS: [MATTHEW LEYLAND](#)

J.J. Fact File *Star Trek* (2009)



What? A franchise reboot that whisks the *Trek*-verse off into an alternate timeline.

Who? Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Zoe Saldana, Karl Urban, Leonard Nimoy, Simon Pegg.

J.J.'s role? First coming on as a producer, Abrams soon took the director's chair on the recommendation of his *M:I:III* writers Roberto Orci and Alex Kurtzman.

Any good? A revamp everyone can get on board with, from die-hards to those who wouldn't be seen dead at a sci-fi convention. Buoyant, buffed and with the promise of even better to come, this is the freshest *Trek* in decades.

Our rating: ★★★★★

Editor's Log, Earth-date 11 November, 2008. Have gathered with fellow journalists, VIPs and no doubt a few liggers in London's Leicester Square for exclusive preview of footage from new *Star Trek* reboot, intro-ed by director J.J. Abrams. Air heavy with anticipation.

Belly even heavier with complimentary cupcakes bearing familiar Starfleet insignia. Tasty, oh so tasty... but will footage be just as flavoursome? Dim lights...

Today we're seeing four scenes plucked from different points in the film. First up, fittingly, is a sequence centred on one James Tiberius Kirk. As portrayed by 28-year-old

Chris Pine, this is a younger, buffer version of the Kirk we know. In other words, even cockier. Within minutes, he's embroiled in a bar fight with a group of Starfleet cadets, narked by his attempts to chat up linguistics student Nyota Uhura (Zoe Saldana). The music's loud, the punches hard, the banter racy (Uhura: "I thought you were just a dumb hick who only has sex with farm animals..."). The scene feels fresh, earthy – and not too science-fiction-y.

Moments later, though, we're in more traditional genre territory. Kirk, gunning it on his bike across an epic landscape, comes to a halt before a half-built starship... the Enterprise. It's a glorious reveal, pumped with detail. It chimes not only with the film's first teaser (punchlined 'Under Construction') but with an earlier chunk of *Trek* history – one with personal resonance for Abrams.

You've probably heard the story of how a 13-year-old J.J. joined his dad, telly producer Gerald W. Abrams, for the inaugural internal screening of 1979's *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* (the series' celluloid debut). But did you hear the part about the future filmmaker's Enterprise epiphany? "I remember being blown away by the scale of the ship," Abrams reveals as he sits down for a chat shortly after >>



The new Enterprise bridge – same but different.

STAR TREK

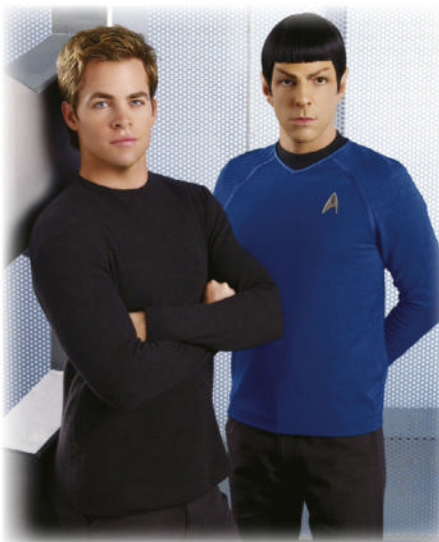




Let's face it, we've all had days like this.

the Leicester Square presentation. "In the sequence where Kirk takes the shuttle over to the Enterprise... it was the first time I could see the front lights, the first time I could scrutinise the panels: it was the first time I believed it was real. The ship was shown in a way that felt legitimate; it was no longer a TV show. I so loved that aspect of the film and it was something I tried to emulate on this one."

The rose-tinted image of a teenage J.J. gazing awestruck at the silver screen is somewhat undercut by his admission, in front of the preview crowd, that he's "never really been a huge *Star Trek* man" (he is – whisper it – more of a *Star Wars* fan. More on that later...). He's seen all the movies, sure, but not every episode of the five TV iterations (six if you include the '70s cartoon). It's not a problem,



"For me Star Trek was always the Kirk and Spock story"

J.J. ABRAMS

though. In fact, gorging on the lot would've been more hindrance than help, he reckons: "I watched bits of all the series just to see what was being done. How it all connected. But at a certain point I felt that being so inside of it might not actually be an advantage... You start to become burdened, in a way, by the constraints of what came before, as opposed to telling a thrilling story."

A TALE OF TWO SPACEMEN

The *Lost* man had no doubts what the nub of that narrative should be. "For me, *Star Trek* was always the original Kirk and Spock story," Abrams asserts. "They were the characters I cared about. So when they [Paramount] asked me to do the film, I didn't feel like I would be very good at doing a completely separate space adventure that had the *Star Trek* name on it. But going back to the beginning... that was more interesting. Kirk and Spock were always just Kirk and Spock, so I was intrigued by how they became that team."

But who to cast in such iconic roles – roles that have been filled as snugly as slippers since the '60s by William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy. "The actors were so connected to those characters that it was impossible to imagine anyone else playing Kirk and Spock other than Shatner and Nimoy," reflects Abrams, "until you actually do it and do it right." Yet in his



first try-out, Pine felt he was the wrong man for the job. "I remember it being an abysmal audition," the star tells us with a wry grin. "I did two scenes and they were chock-full of jargon; I had a difficult time wrapping my head around the whole thing." Second time around, Pine nailed it, clicking first with Abrams then with Zachary Quinto – an actor "born to play Spock" according to J.J. If Pine initially felt a certain ambivalence, there was nothing but certainty for Quinto, who actively pursued his pointy-eared part.

"I was always compelled by this character," growls the gravel-voiced thesp. "I understand his duality." Funny he should say that – because in this film, you get two incarnations of the half-human/half-Vulcan science officer for the price of one. Thanks to a time-travel twist, Spock as we know him – ie Leonard Nimoy – beams into the action at a crucial juncture, lending his old/new friend Kirk a hand. Older and just as wise, at one point he warns Jim not to make Spock the younger aware of his existence – although it was a different story off-screen. "Leonard was very available to me," reveals Quinto. "There were many conversations between us that were helpful to my understanding of the character." Keen as he is to stress how giving and gracious Nimoy was, Quinto is equally clear that he's his own man/Vulcan. "The character wouldn't



exist without Leonard," he reasons, "but I inhabited him in a different way – a way that is uniquely mine."

Pine's on the same page as his co-star. "The idea of doing an impression of Shatner... it would have no shot at succeeding," he says, his speech peppered, ironically, with Shatner-esque pauses. "The character is Jim Kirk, not William Shatner." Still, Pine did seek his forerunner's blessing, penning a conciliatory letter after Shatner missed out on a Nimoy-esque encore. "I'd heard he was upset about not being included and I just wanted to make sure I got myself out of, you know, the gunfight..."

If pride doesn't prevent The Shat checking out the finished flick at his local multiplex, he'll be whisked into a brave new familiar world – one that pays its dues to *Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry's vision while judiciously updating it. "The whole approach was, commit to the spirit of what Roddenberry was doing but don't commit to the literal aesthetic of it," explains Abrams, who wanted to bring a "utility and a legitimacy to the stuff that was so potentially campy". Like the uniforms... "There were a handful of things I felt we had to retain so that when people glance at it they'll go, 'Yep, that's *Star Trek*'. But if you look carefully at the uniforms, you'll see there are a lot of differences that make them more 'real'.

Meet the crew

The guys and gal of the new Enterprise...



James T Kirk
(Chris Pine)

Tearaway son of a starship captain. Could follow in his footsteps – if he stops screwing up.



Spock
(Zachary Quinto)

Half-human, half-Vulcan who, for at least part of the movie, takes command of the Enterprise.



Dr Leonard 'Bones' McCoy (Karl Urban)

Often exasperated medicine man responsible for sneaking a disavowed Kirk on board the Enterprise.



Montgomery 'Scotty' Scott (Simon Pegg)

Sardonic Scottish engineer currently in exile for a transporter mishap involving the Starfleet admiral's dog.



Nyota Uhura
(Zoe Saldana)

Brainiac cadet with a thing for languages who is quickly promoted to communications officer.



Hikaru Sulu
(John Cho)

Japanese-American ensign who wields a mean katana blade when not flicking levers.



Pavel Chekov
(Anton Yelchin)

Russian ensign eager to prove himself... and to get the damn computer to understand his accent.

We tried to make what worked 43 years ago work at a higher resolution."

As with the costumes, so with the hub of any *Trek* adventure – the Enterprise bridge. "It wasn't until I looked back at the old series that I realised how different the bridge looked," relates Simon Pegg, who plays engineer Montgomery 'Scotty' Scott. "When you're on it, everything seems to be in the same place but things have been subtly modified, moved around." The set was a big hit with the cast, its tactile nature

>>



The film finally confirmed Uhura's first name: Nyota.

“The underlying theme of Star Trek has always been optimism, and I think that carries through this movie”

ZACHARY QUINTO

making good on Abrams' aim of keeping things grounded. “[Production designer] Scott Chambliss did an amazing job,” raves Quinto. “He brought the bridge to life in a very practical way with all the buttons and lights and screens – there was a lot for us to play with.”

With planet Vulcan under attack from the fiendish Romulans, the secrecy-sworn actors refuse to be drawn on the rest of the plot. “Mmmm... Ummm... Ohhh... No, not without giving anything away!” replies Eric Bana when asked to cite his favourite scenes. The Aussie star sinks his teeth into the role of Nero, leader of the Romulan aggressors. “He’s intent on mass destruction... sometimes brooding, sometimes lacking self-control. I knew he was someone I could have a bit of fun with.”

A number of Nero's tattoo-faced brethren pitch up in our final footage-taster of the day, where Kirk, a sword-swinging Sulu (John Cho) and a chap in red duds – never a good omen, as

any Trekker will tell you – freefall from a shuttle into a high-rise smackdown. It's a stunner of a sequence, bejewelled with top-of-the-range effects by ILM. “They did an incredible job,” says Abrams. “What’s great about *Star Trek* is that the people working on it have six *Star Wars* movies under their belts, so we got to do things that are the result of all that experimentation and experience.”

Crafting a galaxy as gorgeous as George's fulfils something of a long-nursed fantasy for Abrams, who's previously 'fessed up to a childhood preference for *Wars* over *Trek*. Dissecting the appeal of origin stories, he readily references *Episode IV*: “One of my favourite things about those kinds of movies is that you see someone beginning as you or me – a farmboy in *Star Wars*, for example – and by the end of the film you see them defeat the evil that seemed so much larger than them. There's a really empowering aspect to that.”



Bruce Greenwood plays original Enterprise captain Christopher Pike.



The parallels are plain to see – a young farmboy with parent issues taking his first step into a larger world... “Lots of stories deal with journeys like that,” counters Pegg. “*Star Wars* itself wasn’t really that original – it owed a lot to what had gone before. But this film is like *Episode IV* in that you’ve got a cast of largely unknowns, backed up by a few veterans [Nimoy, Bana, Winona Ryder as Spock’s ma] to provide some gravitas.”

LOOKING UP

Most everything about the film inspired new hope... yet, given *Star Trek*’s low stock in previous years – the failure of 2002’s *Nemesis* and prequel series *Enterprise* – was a relaunch something of a hard sell? Even before the film’s release Quinto could see the draw. “It’s got a built-in fanbase, and J.J. has a fanbase of his own – the work he’s done is so highly regarded that people will be excited for that reason alone. It’s got a new look, new feel... so my feeling is no, it won’t push audiences away; it’ll draw in more than the other movies were able to.”

He wasn’t wrong. *Star Trek* went on to gross almost \$385m worldwide, became a critical success and even won an Oscar for make-up (it was nominated for four in total). According to Quinto, it’s all about the heart. “Ever since Gene Roddenberry conceived it, the underlying theme of *Star Trek* has always been optimism, and I think that carries through this movie as well. There are glimpses into other emotional states, but I think a faith in our humanity is at the core of it.”

Abrams shares the sentiment. “I feel the best thing about the movie is the people, which was the goal going in. Yes, there are phasers and tricorders, but it’s not a gadget-centric film... It’s a human slash Vulcan-centric film with technology in the fine print.”



Zoe Saldana

The new Uhura on outfits, meteors and being a horse...

What’s Uhura like when we first meet her?

She’s in a really good place. She’s ahead of her class, very intelligent... kind of a sexy geek, you know? I like that – I’ve always been very turned on by handsome brains!

Were you a fan of the original character?

She was a rock star, a total rock star. Not just as a woman of colour, but as a woman period, to hold a high rank and have a whole bunch of guys answer to her while wearing that little uniform... I thought that was so awesome.

Is your costume as distinctive?

It’s definitely very similar in terms of the absence of fabric! But [costume designer] Michael Kaplan is so stellar. There were times I felt I couldn’t sneeze, but it was so worth it!

Are you ready to become a pin-up?

You know what, as long as there’s a balance, bring it on. My years of trying to prove myself as an intelligent individual are over. My mom made me aware that, even though brains should be more important than body, the body counts because it ages and we wish we could have done things with it. But that doesn’t mean I’m going to do *Playboy*!

Was it tough being the only woman?

I loved it! For some reason it always turns out that way; I’m sort of a guys’ kind of girl, and I’m pretty sure I held my own.

How did you psych up for the role?

Well, I tend to approach my characters through their animals [laughs]! I honestly feel human beings have an

animal essence, and with Uhura I thought she was like a beautiful, elegant horse, very stoic and firm and still.

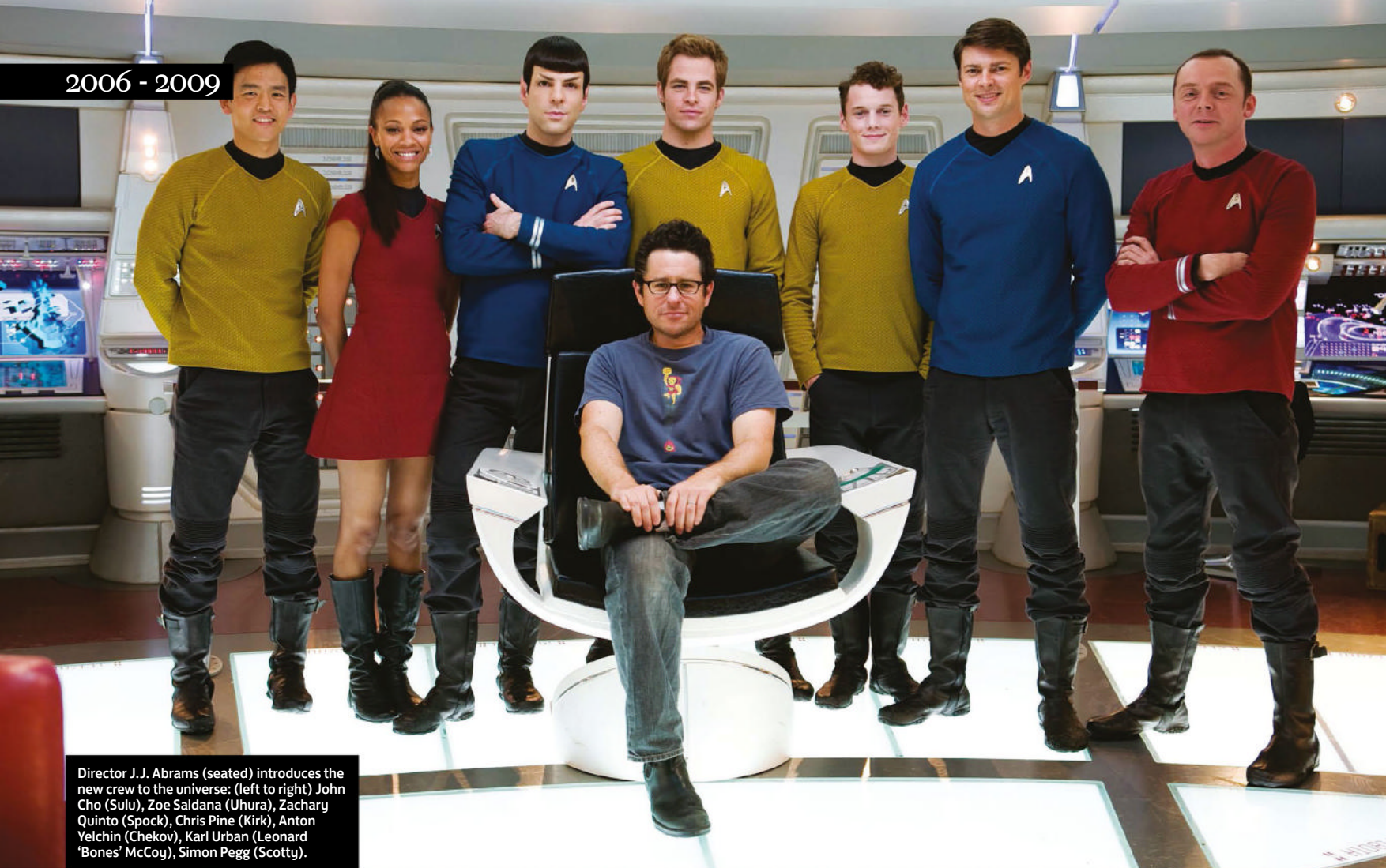
Do you get involved in the action?

Not so much this time. Every day I kept conveying to J.J. how I wanted to hold a gun and take part in the ass-kicking, but I think that will be left for the sequel.

What was it like on the Enterprise set?

It was great, because half of the gadgets actually worked. The difficult part was the greenscreen. We’d be told, “The meteor is coming!” and then we’d keep asking all these questions... “J.J., what size meteor? What colour? How close?” Half of us would be looking in one direction and the rest of us the other and J.J. would be like, “Guys, there’s only one meteor!”

2006 - 2009



Director J.J. Abrams (seated) introduces the new crew to the universe: (left to right) John Cho (Sulu), Zoe Saldana (Uhura), Zachary Quinto (Spock), Chris Pine (Kirk), Anton Yelchin (Chekov), Karl Urban (Leonard 'Bones' McCoy), Simon Pegg (Scotty).

DRESSING FOR SUCCESS

In an extract from their new book *Star Trek: Costumes*, Paula M. Block and Terry J. Erdmann explore the creation of Starfleet's new look.

Star Trek comes with a lot of baggage – nearly fifty years' worth. The established continuity – often referred to by its most avid fans as 'canon' – is contained within more than seven hundred hours of episodic television and a dozen feature films (and counting). That much continuity might seem a bit intimidating, to say the least. *Star Trek* fans embrace it; casual moviegoers, on the other hand, can't be faulted for worrying they'd need a

copy of *The Star Trek Encyclopedia* in order to comprehend a new *Star Trek* movie.

Just ask Michael Kaplan. In 2007, when director J.J. Abrams first invited him to be the costume designer on a new *Star Trek* film, he said no. "I'm not a Trekkie," Kaplan explains. "I was aware of *Star Trek* when I was growing up, but it's not something that I ever followed. So I said, 'I just don't feel qualified. It's territory that I'm not equipped to take on.'"

Which isn't to say Kaplan has anything against the science

fiction genre per se. His first feature credit was, after all, *Blade Runner*, for which he shared a BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) award for Best Costume Design with Charles Knode. And, ironically, it was his lack of ties to the sci-fi genre that helped him to land that job: "I was really young when I did *Blade Runner*," he says. "Ridley Scott, the director, had been meeting with people in the Costume Designers Guild, and he finally told them, 'Isn't there anybody young in this

organisation? People are coming to me, and when they hear my movie is futuristic, they start talking to me about silver Mylar spacesuits! That's not what I'm thinking about! Isn't there anybody young?'"

The guild president asked Scott if he'd like to meet the youngest member of the group: Michael Kaplan.

"Ridley said, 'What the hell,' and that's how that came to be," Kaplan concludes cheerfully.

It was an auspicious start to a career that has since included



The *Original Series*' menswear included naval-inspired belled trousers and Cuban heeled boots. For the reboot, Michael Kaplan gave Spock (Zachary Quinto) and Kirk (Chris Pine) more of a formfitting rough-and-tumble look that included boots with sensible athletic soles.



The iconic miniskirt uniform and Starfleet issue boots instantly led audiences to identify Zoe Saldana as Uhura.

Flashdance, *Se7en*, *Armageddon*, *Fight Club*, *I Am Legend*, *Burlesque*, and more recently, *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens*.

Despite Kaplan's initial reluctance to work on that new *Star Trek* movie, J.J. Abrams wasn't ready to take no for an answer. "His producer got back to me and said, 'J.J. knows your work, loves your work, and would like to meet you,'" Kaplan recalls. "I said, 'I really don't feel like I'm the right person, but I would like to meet him.'"

They ultimately met at a coffee shop in Maine, where Abrams was vacationing. "We talked for like two hours," the designer says. "I went from saying 'No, no, no, I don't want to do this,' to 'I've gotta work with this guy.'"

"Michael's reputation preceded him," explains director J.J. Abrams. "I'm a massive *Blade Runner* fan, and his work in that movie and so many other films over the years just blew my mind. He's had an incredible career."

The two men established a quick rapport. "We had a conversation about what the approach to the movie might be," Abrams says, "and it was immediately a meeting of the minds. Michael sort of said everything that I hadn't articulated, but had been feeling. And he would continue to do that throughout the development of the film. I would go to meetings with him and leave feeling almost confused, because the entire thing had gone so smoothly and so

productively that I almost felt like he had hypnotised me."

The feeling seems to have been mutual. "Every time I said something self-deprecating or brought up a reason why I wasn't equipped, J.J. made it into a plus," Kaplan says. "He said, 'That's what I'm looking for. I can see from your work that you can fill in the dots. You can do what's appropriate and yet make it fresh. I don't want somebody who is going to take us down the same road. I want somebody who's going to blaze a new trail.' That gave me the confidence."

In fact, virtually none of the behind-the-scenes professionals the director would hire for the *Star Trek* reboot had previously worked on the franchise; they

were all trailblazers. Abrams wanted individuals who could help reframe the way the public thought about the franchise. Together, they would reinvent it for a whole new generation.

So Kaplan finally said yes and began to pick up a *Star Trek* education. "I was very fearful," he says. "I thought that I had to

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2006 - 2009

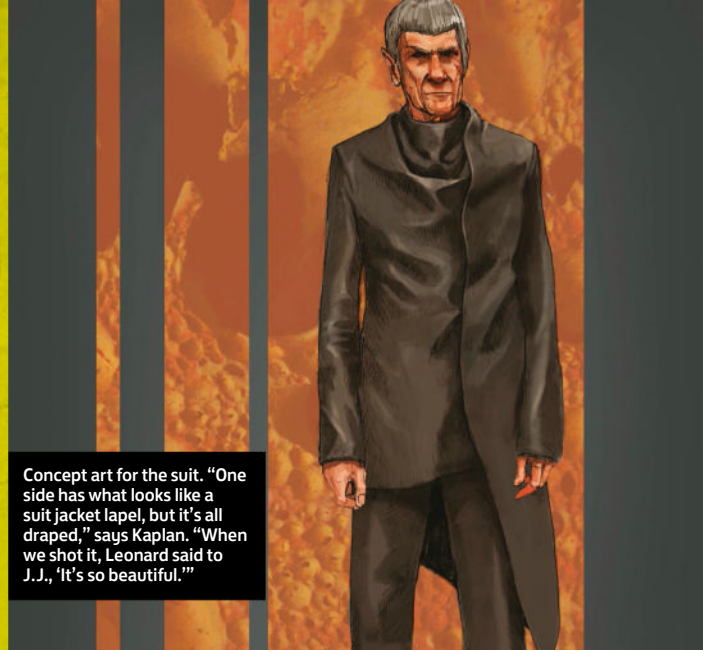


Young Spock (Jacob Kogan) framed by Michael Kaplan's "somewhat oppressive" collar.

Kaplan's sketches for the Young Spock uniform.

Kaplan's design for Spock's sweater helped actor Zachary Quinto look younger in this scene than the more mature Starfleet officer he appeared as later.





Concept art for the suit. "One side has what looks like a suit jacket lapel, but it's all draped," says Kaplan. "When we shot it, Leonard said to J.J., 'It's so beautiful.'"



Spock Prime, wearing a suit that Michael Kaplan designed for him, exchanges the Vulcan hand salute with his younger self.

know all of the terminology, but it's one step at a time. You're not really following the history of *Star Trek*, you're following the script that's put in front of you and creating what's appropriate for the movie at hand."

In searching for a tone that would work for both *Star Trek* fans and general moviegoers, Kaplan narrowed his focus to the first TV series. "I wanted our movie to be familiar territory in a familiar world for the Trekkies," he says. "I looked at a lot of still photographs from *Star Trek*. I wasn't trying to duplicate that look, but I wanted it to be a take-off point from the same world that people grew up with and liked so much."

As part of his research, Kaplan reviewed the work of fashion designers such as Mary Quant, André Courrèges, and Rudi Gernreich, whose work figured so prominently during the era in which *Star Trek* originated. His intention was not to imitate them, but simply be aware of them and the influences that had spurred their creativity at the time.

"*The Original Series* was based in the sixties," he explains, "and I wanted it to stay true to that, without it looking like we were doing a period piece. In this day and age, there is no length skirt that is de rigueur. Anything goes. So you can do short skirts, and it doesn't have to feel like the sixties. It can feel very 2000s. It's all in how you approach it."

Reimagining the classic Starfleet uniforms worn by Enterprise crew members may have been Kaplan's most daunting task. He knew that they had to be grounded in iconic pieces from the old show, but reinterpreted in a fresh way – clean, modern uniforms in those familiar shades of red, blue, and mustardy gold.

"We wanted to embrace the look that people remembered," emphasises Abrams, "but not necessarily do it the same as it was then. Make these essentially primary-colour uniforms into something that you wouldn't think about – you'd just accept them. You would believe. That required much more thought



Kaplan's sketches show that the hood disassembles to become a fur collar.

and research and designing than you'd think. But Michael made it look easy.

"Those costumes were going to be front and centre for so much of the movie," Abrams continues, "and I felt that the film-going audience was ready for more sophistication than what they'd seen before. I fell in love with Michael's idea that, in addition to their familiar colours, these uniforms would have a pattern that sometimes you're aware of and sometimes you're not. When there was an extreme close-up, audiences would see what they'd been looking at and not realising was there: that little Starfleet insignia."

"I had the insignia pattern printed on the fabric with a grade of ink that's three dimensional," reveals Kaplan. "That puts it above the fabric. It has a certain dimensionality to it. We dyed all of the costume fabrics – the mustard, the dark red, and the teal blue – and then we printed on them in a different colour. It had to be a different colour, say a different shade of red, or it wouldn't show up. I quickly realized that it wasn't going to be easy. It took a number of different attempts at combining the base colour of the fabric with the colour of the design so that the overall effect was what I envisioned. We had to keep balancing it, and we had to do

that for each colour. I drove the printing people a bit mad."

Abrams points out that this was just one of the many times when Kaplan took what the director admits was a rather undefined request from him and transformed it into something amazing. "I literally said to Michael, 'Let's make this in high resolution,'" Abrams explains, "and he came back and showed me the design elements in the fabric of the uniforms. That sort of thing doesn't just happen. It's the result of someone who figures out, 'Well, here's a way to do it that's subtle and makes sense, that may not be perceived by most people, that will end up at that IMAX theatre registering in a way that makes that moment, and makes the character wearing that wardrobe, believable.'"

Incorporating the arrowhead-shaped Starfleet insignia into the fabric was a gutsy move, one that could have been perceived as kitschy, or over the top in terms of pandering to the sentiments of longtime fans. But it paid off. Kaplan notes that while viewers new to the franchise did not pick up on the design, the die-hard fans spotted it immediately. "Thankfully, the reaction from them was extremely positive," he says.

Star Trek: Costumes is out now from Titan Books

Star Trek

The abridged script

WORDS: ROD HILTON

FADE IN:

EXT. IOWA, USA

CHRIS PINE walks into a bar and meets **ZOE SALDANA**.

CHRIS PINE

Hey baby, let's go back to my place.

ZOE SALDANA

What a classy way to introduce yourself as the new Captain Kirk.

A fight breaks out between **CHRIS PINE**, **STARFLEET CADETS** and **THE CAMERAMAN**. **BRUCE GREENWOOD** arrives.

BRUCE GREENWOOD

Enlist in Starfleet. Your father was a great captain before a big metal cactus killed him.

CHRIS joins **STARFLEET** and plays **STAR TREK DRESS-UP**.

INT. STARFLEET ACADEMY - EARTH

CHRIS acts like an obnoxious fratboy. **ZACHARY QUINTO** accuses him of cheating on a test.

ZACHARY QUINTO

I demand Chris Pine be expelled from the academy.

Everyone who's had a line so far winds up on the **USS ENTERPRISE**.

BRUCE GREENWOOD

We've got a distress signal

from planet Vulcan. They have reported a giant metal cactus in space.

CHRIS PINE

Metal cactus? IT'S A TRAP!

BRUCE GREENWOOD heeds **CHRIS'** advice to stop the ship. They see other **STARSHIPS** being destroyed by **ERIC BANA'S** metal cactus. **ERIC** takes **BRUCE** hostage and destroys **VULCAN**.

CHRIS PINE

Zachary, we've got to rescue Bruce.

ZACHARY QUINTO

That would be highly illogical. With him gone, our rating in the 18-24 demographic has increased.

ZACHARY maroons **CHRIS** on an ice planet and heads to **EARTH**. **CHRIS** runs into **LEONARD NIMOY**.

LEONARD NIMOY

I am the future Zachary. I created a black hole using red matter. Eric Bana and I were sent back in time.

CHRIS PINE

This is stupid. Are you done yet?

LEONARD NIMOY

With the franchise? I hope so. Eric abducted me when I came through and stranded me here so I could watch Vulcan blow up.



CHRIS PINE

So black holes can destroy planets but send ships back through time?

LEONARD NIMOY

BLACK HOLES LET US DO ANYTHING!

They go to a **FEDERATION OUTPOST** and find **SIMON PEGG**.

SIMON PEGG

I have a thick Scottish accent, which is the comic relief.

LEONARD NIMOY

You and Chris should beam onto a ship travelling at warp speed!

SIMON PEGG

Sure, why not? Believability has totally gone after the red matter.

SIMON and **CHRIS** beam on to the **ENTERPRISE** and confront **ZACHARY**.

CHRIS PINE

Zachary, if I provoke emotion from you then you'll have to step down as captain. So, uh, your mom is dead.

ZACHARY beats the hell out of **CHRIS**.

ZACHARY QUINTO

I will step down. As you have insulted my mother, I now respect you.

CHRIS PINE

So we'll beam on to Bana's ship, steal the red matter, ignite it and beam back.

KARL URBAN

One drop can destroy a planet, so the whole thing...

CHRIS PINE

BLACK HOLES LET US DO ANYTHING!

BANA is destroyed or sent back in time. **CHRIS** and **ZACHARY** become friends as **LEONARD NIMOY** told them to.

STAR TREK FANS

They destroyed Vulcan! This is not Roddenberry's vision! Bwaaahh!

LEONARD NIMOY

You morons will pay for anything with the word *Trek* in the title.

END

SFX

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2006 - 2009

J.J. Fact File

Fringe (2008 - 2013)



What? Sci-fi procedural following a specialist division of the FBI who investigate strange cases.

Who? Anna Torv, Joshua Jackson, John Noble, Jasika Nicole, Lance Reddick.

J.J.'s role? Abrams created the show with his *Alias* and *Star Trek* cohorts Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci. He exec produced all 100 episodes and wrote six.

Any good? A surprisingly soulful delve into weird science. The alt-world twists are something of a headache, but this is the kind of television Abrams excels at – smart, stylish and it never underestimates the intelligence of its audience.

Our rating: ★★★★★

A promotional photograph for the TV show Fringe. The cast members are standing in a large, industrial-style warehouse with high ceilings and concrete pillars. From left to right: a woman in a black dress and shawl, a man in a dark suit, a woman in a blue top and jeans, and a man in a dark suit. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows.

FRINGE

Not content with creating brain-frying TV hits *Alias* and *Lost*, J.J. Abrams went on to launch mind-melting science-fiction show *Fringe* on an unsuspecting (alt) world...

WORDS **TARA BENNETT**

FRINGE

2006 - 2009



It's clear by now that J.J. Abrams just can't leave that glowing box in the corner alone. You'd think that successfully transitioning from hotshot TV series creator to A-list director of blockbuster fare like *M:I:III* and *Star Trek* would be enough for the guy. But no, the small screen is clearly embedded in his DNA. After making romantic angst cool with *Felicity* and then feminising the Bond mystique with super spy Sydney Bristow in *Alias*, in 2004 Abrams and Damon Lindelof followed up with their modern classic *Lost*. And in 2008, he returned with *Fringe*, a creepy, cutting edge science drama that feels like the Frankensteined love child of *Mythbusters* and *The X-Files*. *Fringe* follows the life and cases of FBI Agent Olivia Dunham (Anna Torv), thrust into the world of "way-out there" boffinhood when her partner (and secret lover) gets infected with a manmade plague that turns a planeload of people into putrid goo. Desperate for a cure, she tracks down Dr Walter Bishop (John Noble), a brilliant but crazed scientist who's been incarcerated in a mental institute for 17 years, and springs him in order to save her partner. With the help of Bishop's estranged

son Peter (Joshua Jackson), the trio ends up cracking the case and becoming a dysfunctional, techno-forensic investigative unit.

KINETIC ENERGY

High concept? Absolutely. But that's exactly what we'd come to expect from Abrams and his posse of creative collaborators, including *Fringe* executive producers Alex Kurtzman, Roberto Orci and Jeff Pinkner, who have all been with him since *Alias*. Together their kinetic, creative twists on one-hour drama tropes have earned them fervent fans that have come to love Abrams's style of clever, rollercoaster-ride television.

"The truth is that when we did the pilot for *Lost*, we had the monster appear at the end of the first act," Abrams explains when we chat to him in 2008 as he sets up the *Fringe* shop. "We did that very consciously because we wanted to say to the audience, 'We're jumping the shark now! We're doing crazy stuff from the beginning. We're not going to wait.' And on *Fringe*, we very consciously did what is in many ways a preposterous, 'out there', far-fetched scientific story point in order to say to the audience, 'This is what you're going to be getting on the show.'"

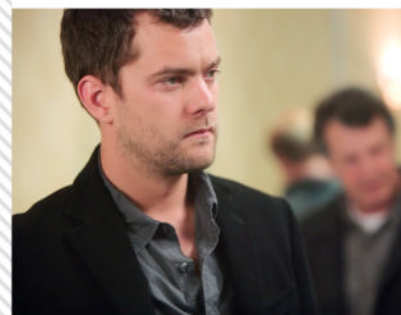
THE FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE

And from the teaser forward it was very clear that *Fringe* would feature boundary-breaking science in both theory and sometimes grisly visual execution. "It may be more extreme in some cases," he continues. "And some shows will deal with science very much as it exists. But I think for the most part, the fun for me with movies and TV shows, especially in the genre of either horror or sci-fi, is that pushing >>

"I think of Fringe as its own self-contained little thriller every week"

JEFF PINKNER, SHOWRUNNER





Weird scientist

Joshua Jackson speaks.

After a long run on *Dawson's Creek*, what was it about *Fringe* that drew you back to TV?

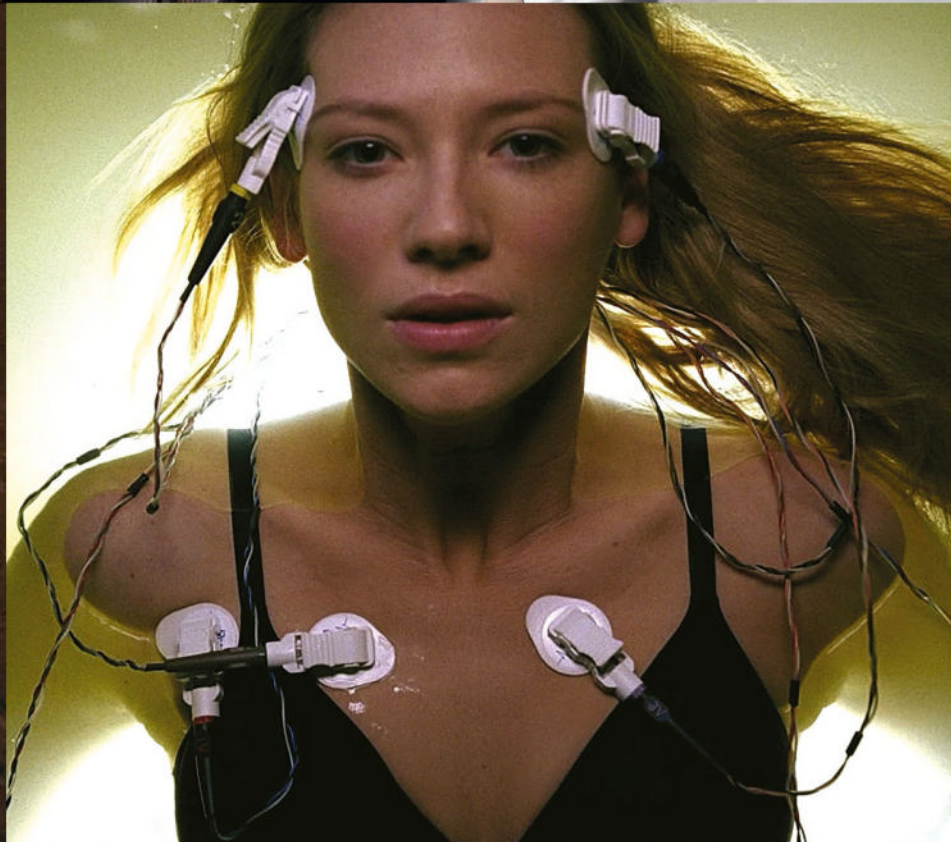
"It was this project specifically that drew me back to TV. Frankly, first it was the quality of the script, which [became] our pilot, and the density of it. And the fact that even while it was a totally satisfying story unto itself, you could see the potential for a whole world, a whole universe of other stories."

So are you a science geek or is the world of *Fringe* really foreign to you?

"I'm an actor because I'm not good at a lot of things [laughs]. We all apply scientific knowledge in one way or another on a daily basis. But I haven't found myself in a lab since high school. Some of the jargon is new to me, but I find the world of science interesting."

How does Peter fit into the show's dynamic?

"A lot of the fun of playing him is basically being a translator more often than not between Walter, [John Noble] who is brilliant, but sort of half cracked, and then Olivia, [Anna Torv] who is an intensely no-nonsense type person. She's not the type of character that you would sit down and have a lyrical, philosophical conversation with. She's very much a 'just the facts, ma'am' type of person. Then you bring this Peter character into that world, who has to try to be the go-between – and initially the extremely reluctant go-between, who's really only brought in by happenstance and then can't get himself out. That's an interesting dynamic because ultimately what that boils down to in my mind is a very typical dysfunctional family. And you put that dynamic, something that's relatable and understandable to everybody, into this fantastically outrageous world of *Fringe* and it makes for an interesting day's work."



2006 - 2009



of the envelope and going further than you might otherwise. I think the show will definitely be pushing the edge of the envelope, but I don't think it's going to be about that. I don't think we're going to be trying to top ourselves every week because then we'll just be in a race against ourselves and there's no way to win that one. I feel like the key is to tell stories that are as compelling, as emotional, as funny and certainly as weird and out there as possible, but not to try and have it be exploiting that aspect of the show.

I would rather be delving into who these people are and what makes them tick than doing something just for shock value."

But real life scientific progress and all its scary repercussions proved to be a goldmine of inspiration for the *Fringe* creative team. Roberto Orci admits, "We've always been fans of science fiction, period, and it started becoming more apparent to us how often mainstream media news sources were covering things that just sounded very unbelievable – things that 10 years ago would have seemed like science fiction. Any time you look now in the science and technology section of any major media outlet, there are some really strange stories in there. The example we keep bringing up is that we read on MSNBC that the Pentagon has developed an invisibility cloak!"

Alex Kurtzman laughs and adds, "I would go so far as to say we wouldn't even have pitched that kind of an idea for *Alias* because it would have sounded too insane, and *Alias* was as crazy as it gets when it comes to plotting. Suddenly, when that's actually your reality and your TV has to match up to that, I think we felt like there's just a whole new opportunity here. And these characters, while touching fringe science, are also either revealing or being forced to reveal the fringes of their personality, and that was always what really attracted us to, say, Cronenberg movies or even *Altered States*, which we obviously make reference to in the pilot. It's about if someone wants to dig deeper

into science, and in so doing, reveals a part of themselves that they didn't necessarily know was there or were actually afraid to see."

NO MORE MEN ON THE MOON

Fringe showrunner Jeff Pinkner says the concept provided them with a wealth of ideas to sift through. "We're finding a lot of fun with this show is the research we're doing. There are a lot of very smart people with a lot of money in the world these days, and they are spending a lot of time and money and smarts. The world has changed in such a way that science doesn't seem to have a goal anymore. When we were kids, it was, 'Let's get to the moon!' And a lot of money and brainpower was spent trying to figure out how to get men onto the moon. Now there's a lot more money and a lot more people that have it and a lot more private industries that have it. And they're all sort of following their imaginations and doing anything they can. And some of it seems to be morally good, and some of it seems to be morally a little bit careless. But anything that we can imagine [in the writer's room], either good or bad, it seems that the real world is already two steps ahead of our imagination. So our stories are being told through our characters, but the things that they're dealing with have kind of made us, as writers, slightly more wary of our world and, at the same time, a little bit more astounded by the possibilities actually exceeding our imaginations right now."





Interestingly enough, the team admits the greatest challenge in developing *Fringe* was applying the lessons learned from their other series to find the perfect balance of accessible storytelling. A common gripe about Abrams' shows has been that they are impossible to just jump into unless you've been there from the start. "Yeah, *Fringe* is a very different show," Abrams explains. "I would say that one of the experiments that we had on *Fringe* [was] writing the show so that it is not as overtly serialised as certainly *Alias* and *Lost* were. How that translates, I don't know. What it will mean, I'm not sure, but because I'm so drawn to overarching and long-term stories, there will still be the mythology, the evolution of characters, the revelations of their story and what 'The Pattern' means and what [the characters] are doing and how they connect to that. So there's all the stuff that's happening, but we're doing it in a way that is much less week to week instalments of that story... which makes it, I hope, something you can watch without feeling like you're not in the club if you've missed an episode."

INTO THE TWILIGHT

That new direction in structure also allowed the writers to model *Fringe* on other shows they deeply respected outside of the genre. While most critics drew comparisons to cult favourite *The X-Files*, the *Fringe* team says people might be surprised by their actual inspirations. "I've never seen *The X-Files*," Abrams deadpans, then

chuckles. "Listen, I'm such a fan of not just *The X-Files*, but *The Twilight Zone* which is one of my favourite shows of all time. I love the original *Nightstalker*. What I love about shows like *The X-Files*, and what they did so well, is they could do creepy stuff *Twilight Zone*-style for more than half the season. They would do a number of shows that had nothing to do with the overall storytelling, the overall mythology and then they would jump in and do one. That is definitely closer to this model. I would even say it's closer to *ER* almost where you have these ongoing relationships, these ongoing storylines and yet week to week when the door bursts open you're faced with the insane urgent situation of the week." Pinkner concurs and adds, "I don't think our show is a science fiction show. I think of it as sort of its own self-contained little thriller every week."

Meanwhile, Abrams says he's just happy to get another chance to expand his catalogue of dramatic fare on television. "My expectations are sort of irrelevant because I never really know what to expect," he offers frankly. "You can never guess or assume what anyone is going to think. But I can say that it's one of those shows that if I had nothing to do with it and saw it coming out, I'd want to kill myself. I'd be so miserable because it is so the show that I'd want to watch [laughs]. That doesn't mean that anyone else will. That doesn't mean that it's good or bad. It just means it is so the kind of the show that I'm excited to see."

Stranger than fiction

The truth is out there: five examples of fringe science from the real world...

- 1 Remote viewing**
 It's the ultimate undetectable spying ability: ESP. During the '70s, China, the USSR and the USA researched its use in intelligence gathering – the Pentagon's \$20m project was known as Stargate. The FBI got in on the act, identifying one serial killer following ESP testimony. Private sector companies like PSI TECH still pursue TRV ("technical remote viewing") development.
- 2 Non-lethal weapons**
 Imagine a chemical spray that could give soldiers uncontrollable flatulence, or a grenade that would attract wasps. In the 1990s, a US Air Force lab pitched for funding for just such research. One of its projects was the so-called "Gay Bomb" which would cause infantry troopers to become irresistibly attracted to each other – a "distasteful but completely non-lethal" blow to morale, according to the paperwork.
- 3 Machine anomalies**
 Up until its last year, Princeton's Engineering Anomalies Research lab tested how human thoughts might influence physical reality. Ever wondered if you could make a computer crash just by thinking about it? This was the kind of phenomena researched for 27 years at one of America's most prestigious universities.
- 4 Body sensors**
 MALINTENT is a lie-detector project from the Department of Homeland Security, which can scan to see if you're likely to be a terrorist while you check onto a flight. From a distance, the computer's sensors read your temperature, twitches, heart rate and breathing and match it against patterns that terrorists are known to exhibit. It's already been tested in Maryland!
- 5 Tireless warriors**
 DARPA (the Pentagon's Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency) instigated a "metabolic dominance" programme – engineering soldiers who can forgo food and sleep. Its mission statement promises DARPA will "enable superior physical performance by controlling energy metabolism on demand", so soldiers can fight for up to five days without sustenance.



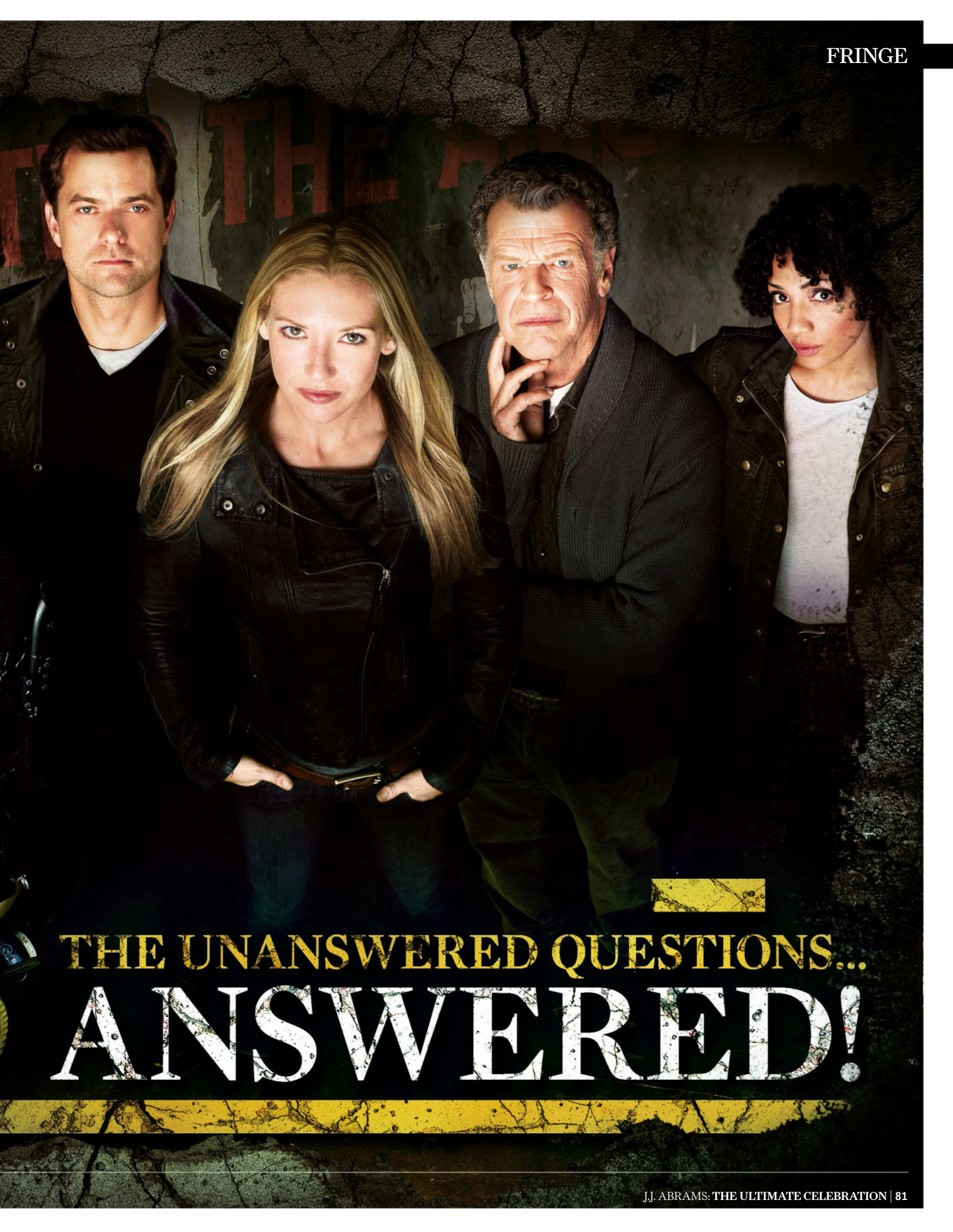
Over the span of five seasons and 100 episodes, *Fringe* served up SF stories as smooth and satisfying as Walter Bishop's fabled strawberry milkshakes. FBI Agent Olivia Dunham and Walter and Peter Bishop investigated extreme science cases that established a new gold standard of strangeness for the small screen. More importantly, we fell in love with their characters. We loved their dysfunction, their heart-breaking vulnerability, and hell, we even fell for their alt-universe selves by season three. Now the show is over, we've taken the chance to unpick some of the lingering puzzles in the show's mythology. We've asked co-executive producers Alison Schapker and David Fury, who came to the show in seasons three and four respectively, to clarify some of our outstanding questions about the *Fringe* universe...

Some viewers are puzzling over whether everything that happened before the Observer Invasion erases everything in seasons one through three. Can you clarify?

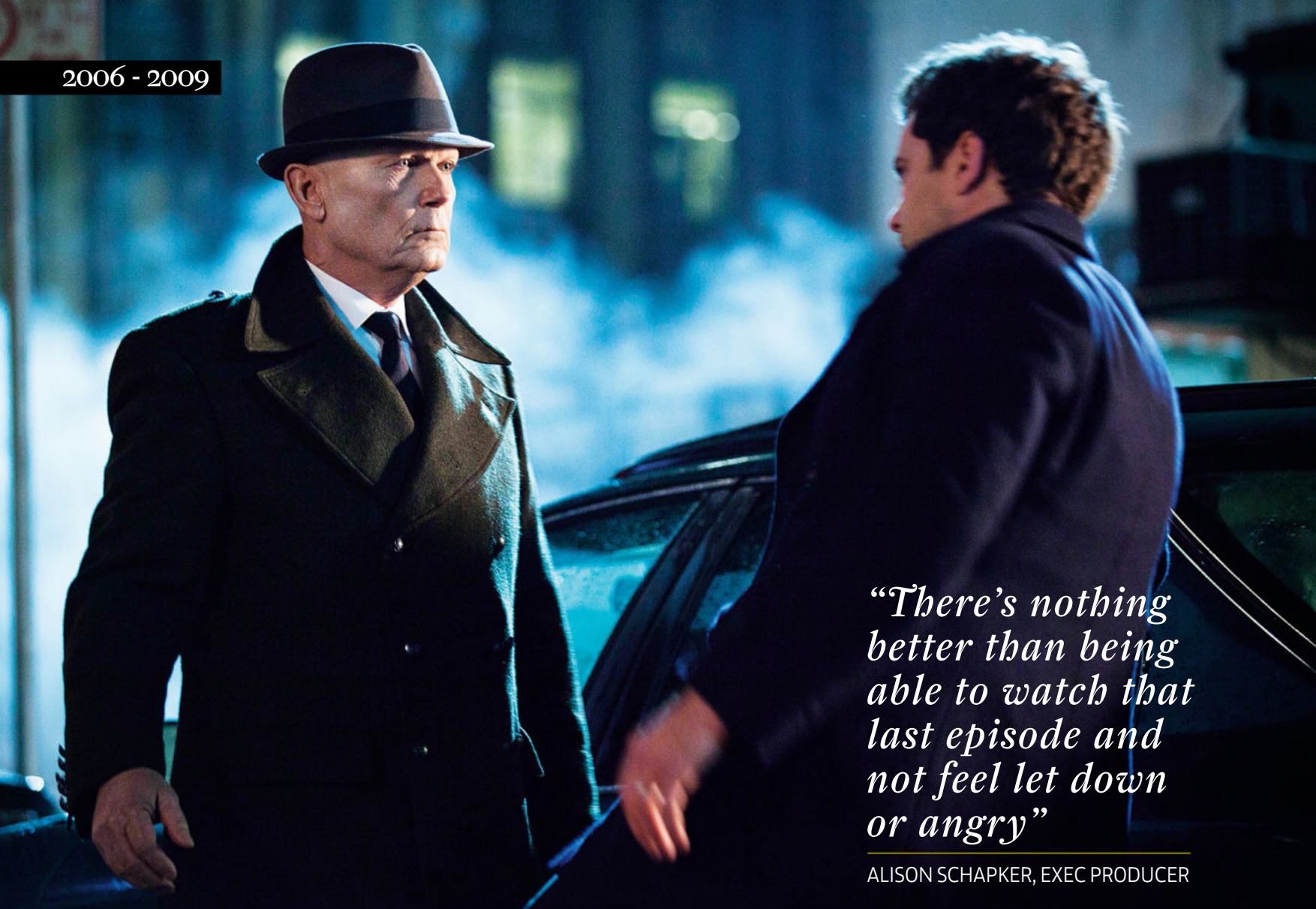
David Fury: Here is my take on it: we are still in the revised timeline where Peter died as a child. The dystopian future was the future of the timeline of season four, therefore Peter did die as a child in this timeline. However, we know he reappeared in this timeline in season four and became part of this family. Then Olivia regained the memory of the erased timeline, so she remembers seasons one through three even though she didn't really experience it in the timeline. The same with Walter after Michael touches him in season five, so now Walter remembers it. So they have a shared memory of seasons one through three but the life they are continuing is the life presented in season four. As far as what happens when Walter and Michael step into the corridor to the future, our premise is that

the change happens – and it's the part that is inexplicable but go with it – once they step through Walter and September stop existing in the timeline. It's not that they never existed. They still experience the events of season four and still have all the memories of the earlier seasons when the timeline hadn't been erased, however they stop existing at the moment of the Invasion. It's not like Walter died. Peter is just going to find Walter missing. He's not going to be looking for September because he didn't continue their relationship, just Walter did. When he looks for Walter, he just won't be there because this corrects the paradox. It's somewhat nebulous but that is the premise of what we did. >>

FRINGE



THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS...
ANSWERED!



“There’s nothing better than being able to watch that last episode and not feel let down or angry”

ALISON SCHAPKER, EXEC PRODUCER



Technically, Henrietta would never actually fire this gun.

Did the timeline stuff give you headaches?

Alison Schapker: I just asked David what to do [laughs].

Fury: I think I was personally working under the worst handicap in that I only came to the show in the fourth season and I had to deal with Peter not existing in the show and what that meant. Then in the fifth season, it became this entirely new “Let’s defeat the aliens now and save the Earth” show. As a fan, I got to watch and experience the journey of Olivia and how this family came together. But I didn’t get to play in that because it was undone.

How involved was the writing staff in shaping the ‘Letters Of Transit’ episode?

Fury: The staff had nothing to do with the creation of ‘Letters Of Transit’. It was purely the creation of Joel (Wyman), Jeff (Pinkner) and Akiva (Goldsman). It was their attempt at creating a different dynamic for a potential fifth season. We were a little in the dark about it.

Schapker: I was excited about it. One of the pleasures of working on *Fringe* was that every season was a new paradigm for the characters, and yet they really stayed true to who they were and what they wanted. To put them in a dystopian setting instead of just having *Fringe* cases and overthrow the Observers was a thrilling new paradigm.

So how much of season five was planned out in advance like the Observers Invasion and the White Tulip ending?

Schapker: One of the things Jeff and Joel brought as showrunners was that they were playing long ball with the characters. I wasn’t inside their minds when they came up with [those moments] but they were working towards them for a long time. They weren’t

‘fly by the seat of their pants’ showrunners. We didn’t throw lots of stuff out or start over. There was a lot of care taken in the way we built each episode, especially when it became so serialised in the final season. I think ultimately to the satisfaction of the writers and the audience too, there was a plan in place.

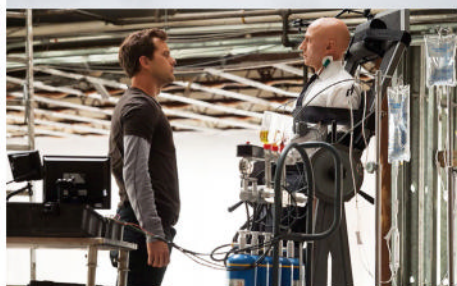
Was Olivia’s Cortexiphan moment in the last act another planned moment?

Schapker: I know the idea was that she would reintegrate herself since she was split off from her Cortexiphan abilities. Olivia was not given a choice as a child, and that was as much a burden as a gift. For the end of the series to have her willingly take on those powers again felt like a very powerful way to complete her arc as a character, and ultimately get back her daughter and her life back.

Was there talk about William Bell (Leonard Nimoy) returning in the final season?

Alison Schapker: I know we all thought it was important to tie up Bell as a loose thread and answer why he was in amber with him. I know we wanted to bring back Henry the cab driver





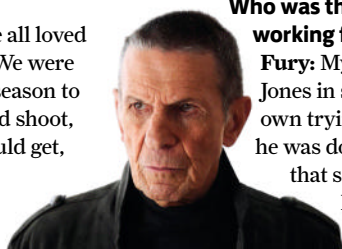
(Andre Royo) but we couldn't afford him.

Fury: There was never an issue if Leonard would do it. He would have if we had asked him to, but we felt we paid off much of his character in season four. Bringing him back was brought up but... we didn't know where William Bell would be. If he becomes an ally to them, he's just another person and that's not interesting. What made Bell interesting was him in counterpoint, but the Observers were the counterpoint. There was no way to figure out an interesting place for Bell to be. We kept the idea of him alive: we kept his hand alive and talked about his relationship with Nina. We serviced the idea of William Bell but revisiting him in this environment didn't feel like it would service his character at all...

Schapker: Especially because we only had 13 episodes.

Was it a running joke to keep Astrid in the lab so much?

Schapker: Nooooo. I think we all loved writing for Astrid's character. We were so hamstrung by budgets this season to the point of how much we could shoot, and how much coverage we could get, how many actors could be in a scene, and who could work



when. Practicalities kept us from exploring her character as much as we would have liked. In the case of the finale, both David and I were passionate about the scene with Astrid, Gene and Walter.

Fury: I helped you fight for it because you were right. We owed the character at least an emotional farewell with Walter. Alison came up with the brilliant scene with Gene the cow. Then it almost came down to not having time or being able to afford it, and if I contributed anything it was just saying, "We have to afford it. We need to do this. We have to do this. Add another day because it's unfair to the fans." There were things in the "Through The Looking Glass" episode where we wanted to give her some kick-ass action but everything kept getting pared more and more down. She probably suffered from it the most because she was support to the family.

What happened with Mr X from 'Lysergic Acid Diethylamide'?

Fury: Regarding what saved Olivia from experiencing death by that man, I think it can be argued that when Peter was erased that changed everything and altered the events so that the man who would eventually be the source of her death would not be the architect of her demise.

Who was the original David Robert Jones working for in season one?

Fury: My belief was that David Robert Jones in season one was acting on his own trying to perpetuate the same thing he was doing in season four. I imagine that since Jones worked for Massive Dynamic, he may have been

aware of some theories Bell had put forth and he was acting on them, but I think he was acting on them on his own because that William Bell was not a bad guy. Season four Bell was a megalomaniac because Walter had not been affected by Peter. All the events spiralled to make him megalomaniacal and it was fun to bring back Jones to reveal that he is actually just someone's flunky. But that's open to interpretation for years to come.

The series finale garnered both critical and fan approval. It had a clear resolution but also kept the audience guessing about future stories. How did you feel about the response?

Schapker: We were relieved and excited.

Everyone knew that people loved the show and we love our fans. We wanted to do right by the people who had stuck with the show. It's not often you get to be as coherent ultimately as *Fringe* was able to be. I think before the season even started, that end was in place. We knew what we were building to, so much so that the image of Walter walking through the portal was on all our minds throughout the season, reminding us how do we deliver? Especially since sci-fi and genre fans have been burned, there's nothing better than being able to watch that last episode and not feel let down or angry. We did our best and were truly motivated by our love for the show and the fans.

Fury: It would have been nice to see our ratings go up a little bit. The thing about a cult show – and I do love writing for cult shows – is that cult fans really love their shows. For the lack of numbers, they make up for it in their passion. Creatively, critically we couldn't have asked for more in terms of people's positive response. And I want to make it clear that Walter's sacrifice is not him going to his death, but going to live his life out in the future. You have the promise of what if Peter and Olivia figure out a way to get to the future and bring Walter back. It will always be in fans' minds. You almost imagine that they need help from Nina to find a way to 2169 to bring Walter back. It felt final, it felt emotional but it goes on and there could be more adventures throughout the years. Fans want to know their characters live on and have more exciting things you can imagine.

Barry Watson starred as Brian, the singleton in a sea of smug marrieds.



What About Brian

Romantic dramedy with no genre trappings.

When? 2006 - 2007.

What? Relationship comedy drama about a single man in his 30s whose friends are all in long-term relationships. Dating, infidelity, fertility and al-fresco dining feature highly.

Who? Barry Watson, Rosanna Arquette, Sarah Lancaster, Matthew Davis, Rick Gomez.

J.J.'s role? Abrams exec produced under his Bad Robot banner. It was created by Dana Stevens and the pilot was directed by Anthony and Joe Russo, who directed *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and are helming the upcoming *Captain America: Civil War* and *Avengers: Infinity War* films.

J.J. says: "I didn't want to set *What About Brian* on a space station – although that's not a bad idea... I just wanted to turn over the stories and create compelling situations so that it felt more like... a very sweet universe."

Any good? Eschewing sci-fi for rom-com, some found it relatable and heart-warming, though critics struggled with its bland cast and rather formulaic storylines. Maybe they should have set it on a space station after all...

Our rating: ★★





Some serious
jaywalking going
on here.

Six Degrees

Six and the city in a twisty tangled drama...

When? 2006.

What? Six New Yorkers with troubled pasts find their lives interacting in coincidental and serendipitous ways in this short-lived show which ran for just 13 episodes.

Who? Jay Hernandez, Hope Davis, Erika Christensen, Campbell Scott, Dorian Missick, Bridget Moynahan.

J.J.'s role? *Six Degrees* was created by Raven Metzner and Stu Zicherman who worked with J.J. on *What About Brian*. J.J. also exec produced the show through Bad Robot.

Any good? Despite rapidly diminishing viewing figures which led to the show's cancellation, the show was praised for its complex interlinking narratives and its quality performances. Arriving two years after Paul Haggis' *Crash* won the best picture Oscar, a show hinging on fate and human connections looked promising but some found the stories too contrived and the concept not focused enough.

Our rating: ★★★



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“At Bad Robot, we have a reputation now for being pretty quiet about things. I would love it if we could just allow people, at least for the first week, to go see the movie and not feel like, ‘Eh, I know it.’”



J.J. Fact File
Super 8 (2011)



What? Kids making a home movie in the late '70s capture a train crash – and something more.

Who? Joel Courtney, Ryan Lee, Kyle Chandler, Elle Fanning.

J.J.'s role? Abrams wrote and directed the film as well as co-producing with Bryan Burke and Steven Spielberg.

Any good? With a sweet message at its heart *Super 8* feels personal and warm, though if the movie missteps it's with a monster that's over-complicated and forgettable.

Our rating: ★★★★★



Monster Squad

How did six kids and a sci-fi nerd create the warmest movie of 2011? We take a look at how *Super 8* gave the blockbuster back its heart.

WORDS ROSIE FLETCHER

In the late '70s and '80s a movie revolution was underway. Smart, heart-stuffed sci-fi was making a stellar resurgence, filling theatres and multiplexes with adults and children alike – moved, awestruck at the new worlds expanding before their eyes. At the centre of this revolution was one little film. A movie that would change the landscape of cinema. Its name? *Toast Encounters Of The Burnt Kind*.

"It was a little comedy animated thing," says J.J. Abrams. "I remember there was this guy in, like, a school playground, and there was this giant piece of toast." Arms aloft, the famed writer, director and producer is now miming a sizeable singed slice looming over a little man.

It's a rainy Thursday in May 2011 and an animated Abrams, 45 but going on 15, is sat with us in London's Dorchester hotel, revelling in childhood memories. "It was this ridiculous thing, it was impressive because Larry made this whole model of his school playground and animated it. I was always amazed by what Larry could do and I'm still amazed today."

He's talking about Larry Fong, cinematographer on *Super 8* (as well as *Watchmen* and *300*) and – crucially – Abrams' boyhood friend. They met over *Toast* back in 1979 and now, with *Super 8*, they're re-living it. Abrams smiles. "I wanted to make *Super 8* feel like it has one foot in the past and one foot in the present."

In a summer of superheroes and sequels, robots and reboots, pirates and pissheads, 2011's warmest blockbuster was a story about a bunch of kids, made by a bunch of big kids. Set in 1979 – Fong and Abrams' own '79 of friendships, home movies and big adventures – *Super 8* channels the magic and wonder of the films that they grew up with: *E.T.*, *The Goonies*, *Stand By Me* and, of course, *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*.

CHILDHOOD'S END

Super 8 is sci-fi seen through a child's eye, the story of pals Joe, Charles, Cary, Alice, Preston and Martin, shooting a zombie movie on a Super 8 camera when they witness an almighty train crash and, with it, the arrival in their small Ohio town of... something. It's a love story, a coming-of-ager, a nostalgia piece, a romp, a monster movie, a tale of friendships, loss, fathers and sons and coming to terms with grief. It's funny. It's fuzzy. It's frantic. And, well, the fact that we're faced with a torrential downpour when we leave the movie screening is no bad thing. We prefer to do our crying in the rain...

This is the film Abrams is making for his childhood self. After all, the LA-raised director began his career, aged 8, when he first got his hands on a Super 8 camera and began shooting home movies. Then there was his 'Toast Encounter' with Larry Fong in his early teens. >>



Both Abrams and Spielberg learned their trade on 8mm film as teenagers.

“I wanted to make Super 8 feel like it has one foot in the past and one foot in the present”

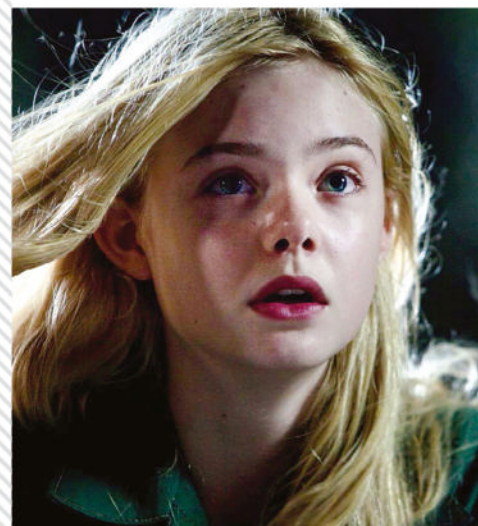
J.J. ABRAMS

His first taste of the festival circuit came when he and buddy Matt Reeves (who would go on to direct Abrams-produced *Cloverfield*) entered a Super 8 film fest. His first brush with the press followed quickly when Abrams and Reeves were featured in an *LA Times* article called ‘The Beardless Wonders’.

And then came *The Bearded Wonder*. Steven Spielberg’s assistant contacted the boys, then aged 15, and asked if they’d take a job fixing the 8mm movies Spielberg himself had made as a child – the pair, naturally, agreed. You couldn’t make it up. But if you did, why not add a train crash and a monster?

“*Super 8* was so connected to experiences that I had as a kid, thank god Larry was there for me to look at and be like, ‘Oh my God, can you believe they’re letting us do this?’” beams Abrams. “The idea for the movie just came out of wanting to do something that revisited that time in my life when I felt I was discovering all sorts of things about what I might want to do and who I might end up being. And the first thing I did when I had this thought was call Steven.”

At the start of *Super 8* you’ll see E.T. right there on screen, next to the Amblin Entertainment logo: he’s hunched in the basket of Elliott’s BMX as it soars past the moon,



J.J. directs Joel Courtney and Riley Griffiths.

a symbol of hope, possibility, magic. It's as if the wrinkly midget has given *Super 8* his blessing, pointing a benevolent finger at the likenesses between the two films, from the young unknown cast to the small-town setting, the clothes, the bikes, and the heart of the film – a troubled child looking for salvation.

Of course Spielberg said yes to Abrams; for aliens in the 'burbs there can be no better boss than 'Berg. "Because Steven was a producer I felt completely free to embrace those similarities," says Abrams. "I honestly cannot separate what my actual childhood was like from the feeling I had of those films at that time."

The films that are important in 15-year-old Joel Courtney's childhood right now apparently include *Kung Fu Panda*, *The Patriot* and *The Terminator* movies. And we're pretty sure the abiding memory of his formative years will be shooting *Super 8*. Same goes for his teenage co-stars Riley Griffiths and Ryan Lee, currently flanking Courtney – who plays young lead Joe, bereaved by the loss of his mother and estranged from his father – in a Dorchester suite.

Before *Super 8* neither Courtney nor Griffiths (who plays film-within-a-film director Charles) had ever been in a movie. And

although Lee – the goggiest of the three, and ideal casting as hyperactive pyromaniac Cary – had "done a total of about 55 projects" pre-*Super 8*, you probably haven't seen him in any of them. Heading up your blockbuster with a bunch of unknown teens could be risky. But then *Super 8* was never about megastars.

"J.J.'s main goal was to make our characters as real as possible," explains Courtney. "With everything not normal going on he just wanted the audience to really connect, that they're really there and everything's really happening and nothing's fake."

According to Griffiths, arcade games were set up for the boys to play during auditions. "It was just us hanging out," he enthuses. "They wanted to see the chemistry, who clicked the most. I clicked with these guys

>>



Pour Elle

The most famous actor on the set of *Super 8* was a 12-year-old girl. Wunderkind Elle Fanning talks fame, fashion and funky monkeys...

You were quite a bit more experienced than the boys on *Super 8* – were you able to offer them any advice?

I was the youngest one! I was 12 and everyone else was older so they were always teasing me. J.J. really helped them, telling them what was going on, what things meant and all the little movie lingo that happens. Now they all understand it and they're on their way, they've done their first movie.

How do you prepare for an emotional role like Alice in *Super 8*?

I've never done any acting classes or anything, my sister [Dakota] hasn't either. It just sort of comes naturally.

Alice is Joe's love interest. Did any of the boys develop a crush on you?

No! What did they say? You didn't get anything out of them? We were all just friends.

Do you have a role model?

I've always looked up to my sister and I hope that we can do something together – maybe we can play sisters. I also really want to work with Meryl Streep. In the fashion world it's Alexa Chung – she's my fashion icon.

Your next film [in 2011] is *We Bought A Zoo* with Matt Damon and Scarlett Johansson...

I play Scarlett's cousin and I work at the zoo. Crystal the monkey who is in *The Hangover* was there. Oh my gosh, she's like a human. She could dance, she could draw, she was amazing.

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Joel Courtney, Elle Fanning and Ryan Lee as the teenage filmmakers.



A touch of Abrams' signature lens flare.



"J.J.'s goal was to make our characters as real as possible"

JOEL COURTNEY

instantly. So when we got cast, we were all just like best friends in the movie. I love these guys just like they're my brothers." And despite a certain media savvy displayed by all three ("everything's great, everyone's wonderful"), we get the sense that that's probably true.

Whether these youngsters will go on to become household names like the kids in *Stand By Me* and (most of) *The Goonies*, or whether like *E.T.*'s Henry Thomas they'll keep a lower profile, remains to be seen. But there's a naturalness, a playfulness, a sense of fun in all three (on and off screen), that's a refreshing change from post-modern smart-ass technotikes, or *High School Musical* automatons.

When 45-year-old Kyle Chandler was 14 he wasn't acting or shooting movies on *Super 8*. He was dealing with the death of his father. "At 14 I was lost in a very strange landscape," he recalls, in what's swiftly becoming the most palpably moving movie junket we've ever attended. "When you're a young man and you lose your father or mother... I know that I disappeared for a year. You're not yourself, you can't contemplate, you don't have the tools to work with..." He tails off.

Chandler, most familiar as high school football coach Eric Taylor in *Friday Night Lights*, plays Deputy Jackson Lamb, father of 14-year-old Joe, who's grieving hard after the death of his mother. "At one point at the end of the film when I go to grab on to Joe it was sort of like I got to be my father talking to me, saying 'Hey, how are you doing?'" he confides. "It was an interesting experience going back to your childhood like that. It was enjoyable in a very sad/happy way." How's that for 'one foot in the past, one foot in the present'?

Yet with all its Spielbergian charm, *Super 8* is still a J.J. Abrams movie. Wander down Main Street, past the Town Hall, the old-style camera store, the homes and the porches, deep into olive-, orange- and ochre- tinted '70s Smalltownsville, and you'll still have to dodge

the falling debris, and watch out for a bloody great monster.

"I didn't want it to look like it was made in 1979, I wanted it to look the way we remember movies looking in 1979," explains Abrams. "When you look at a lot of films from the late '70s some of the visual effects, the technology, film stock, lighting, the way the camera would move, certain cranes and Steadicams – things they just didn't have access to – I didn't wanna restrict ourselves like that."

For visual effects Abrams used George Lucas' landmark company Industrial Light & Magic (founded in the '70s, but certainly not stuck there). *Super 8* is not short on set-pieces, with the relatively modest budget of around \$45m stretched to include tanks and personnel carriers, explosions and debris, the full-sized boxcars and a battering ram shaped like the front of a train.

MONSTER MASH

For creature design Abrams returned to *Cloverfield* monster man Neville Page. "I just wanted something that didn't feel like a silhouette that we'd seen a million times before," says Abrams. "It was so hard to do creature design – I mean look at any of the last *Star Wars* films and every iteration of biped, quadruped, eyes here, eyes there, horns, tentacles – its all been done! It needed to be terrifying and also have nuance. It had to be dextrous and sentient and also furious. Neville is a genius and was able to take all of my ridiculous ramblings and come up with something that I just thought looked really cool."

Abrams bubbles, once more a kid with a box of toys and a Super 8 camera. "Of course the creatures are just a metaphor for the loss this kid is suffering..." Course they are. Awe-inspiring and metaphorical, global and personal, natural and supernatural, old and new: like Abrams' movie, these creatures are big enough to have one foot in each.

Meta mischief

The films within films we need to see...



AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON (1981)

See You Next Wednesday

David Naughton enjoys a grot-shop shag-show. A snip at £2.80!



DAY FOR NIGHT (1973)

Meet Pamela

Fran  ois Truffaut's Ferrand treats his melodrama of illicit love like art. Don't diss before seeing.



KENTUCKY FRIED MOVIE (1977)

A Fistful Of Yen

"This is not a chawadel!" Yes it is: Enter *The Dragon* gets KO'd with bone-breaking FX, killer robots and silly voices.



SINGIN' IN THE RAIN (1952)

The Duelling Cavalier

Bodices bulge in this French Revolution frolic. Talkies won't catch on but they're funny...



JAY AND SILENT BOB STRIKE BACK (2001)

Good Will Hunting 2: Hunting Season

The director's too busy to direct. The star's thinking "about the pay cheque".



BARTON FINK (1991)

The Burly Man

Asked for a Wallace Beery wrestling pic, Fink power-scribes a "guy wrestling with his soul".



THE PLAYER (1992)

Habeas Corpus

The pitch? No stars, no happy ending. The pic? Bruce Willis saves Julia Roberts from death row. It's a hit!



BOWFINGER (1999)

Chubby Rain

Budget? \$2,184. Star? Doesn't know he's in it. Bowfinger's sci-fi movie sees hope triumph over talentlessness.



ADAPTATION (2002)

The Orchid Thief

Nic Cage struggles to turn "sprawling New Yorker shit" into cine-magic. Heads hurt much?



TROPIC THUNDER (2008)

Simple Jack

Tugg Speedman (Ben Stiller) plays the boy who ain't got a good b-b-b-brain. Hang on, something in our eyes...



SCREAM 2 (1997)

Stab

Heather Graham replaces Drew, it's shot in "Stab-O-Vision" and Robert Rodriguez faux-directs.



THE LAST ACTION HERO (1993)

Hamlet

"Hamlet is taking out the trash..." Arnie takes arms against a sea of troubles and terminates Elsinore. KH



Collision course

SUPER 8 | Abrams meets Spielberg head on.

An ode to '70s and '80s Spielberg (*Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*, *E.T.*) and Spielberg-esque adventures (*The Goonies*, *Explorers*), and produced by the big man himself, J.J. Abrams' nostalgia-drenched 2011 blockbuster works on multiple levels. For one thing, it's thrilling, as this spectacular, end-over-end train crash attests.

Shooting a zombie movie at the local train station – for “production values”, according to director Charles Kaznyk (Riley Griffiths) – a unit of high-school strays including Joe Lamb (Joel Courtney) witness an out-of-control truck collide with an unscheduled train. The impact sends carriages and debris flying, destroying the station house and almost flattening the fleeing kids: “I don’t wanna die!” screams Charles, directing the action to the last.

But what he doesn’t know is that his Super 8 camera’s still running, and things are about to get really self-referential. By using their cinematic imaginations to escape the drudgery of smalltown life, these Abrams-in-the-making have caught a movie monster on camera, starting a Spielberg-esque adventure all of their own.

SETTING THE SCENE

- Abrams made childhood films on a Super 8 camera (as did producer Bryan Burk, DoP Larry Fong and composer Michael Giacchino). Spielberg, 20 years older, used 8mm instead.
- The train crash scene was partly improvised and had no set storyboard.
- Abrams and Spielberg combined an Abrams idea about a train transporting secret cargo from Area 51 with a tribute to their filmic youths.
- The result nods to Romero and *Star Wars* among others, but Abrams removed a *Close Encounters* gag.



“It was by far the most fun the kids had shooting the movie, and every time we shot a take they would beg us to do another one.”

J.J. Abrams, writer/director

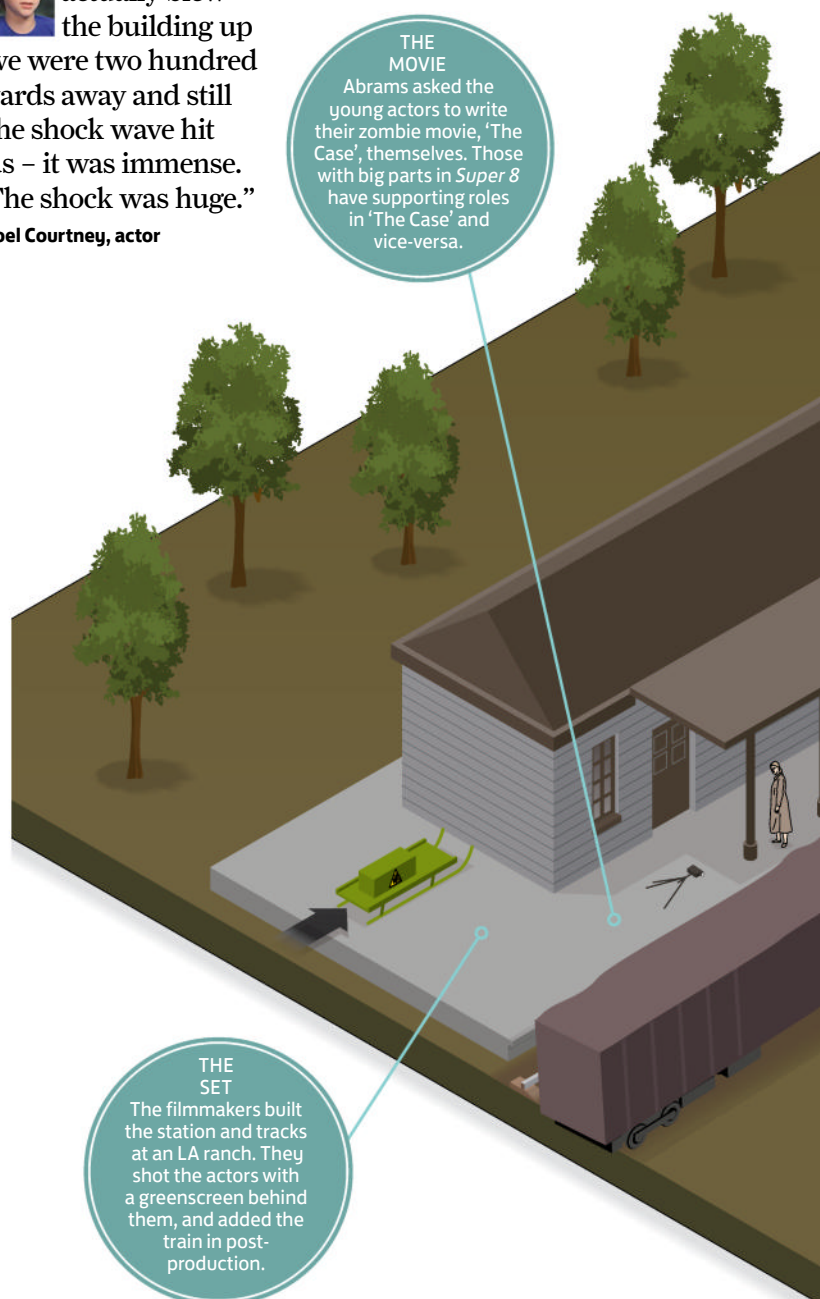


“When they actually blew the building up we were two hundred yards away and still the shock wave hit us – it was immense. The shock was huge.”

Joel Courtney, actor

THE AFTERMATH
The actors ran through the debris as explosions were set off around them. The filmmakers used long lenses to compress the distance, so the kids look much closer to the danger.

THE MOVIE
Abrams asked the young actors to write their zombie movie, ‘The Case’, themselves. Those with big parts in *Super 8* have supporting roles in ‘The Case’ and vice-versa.

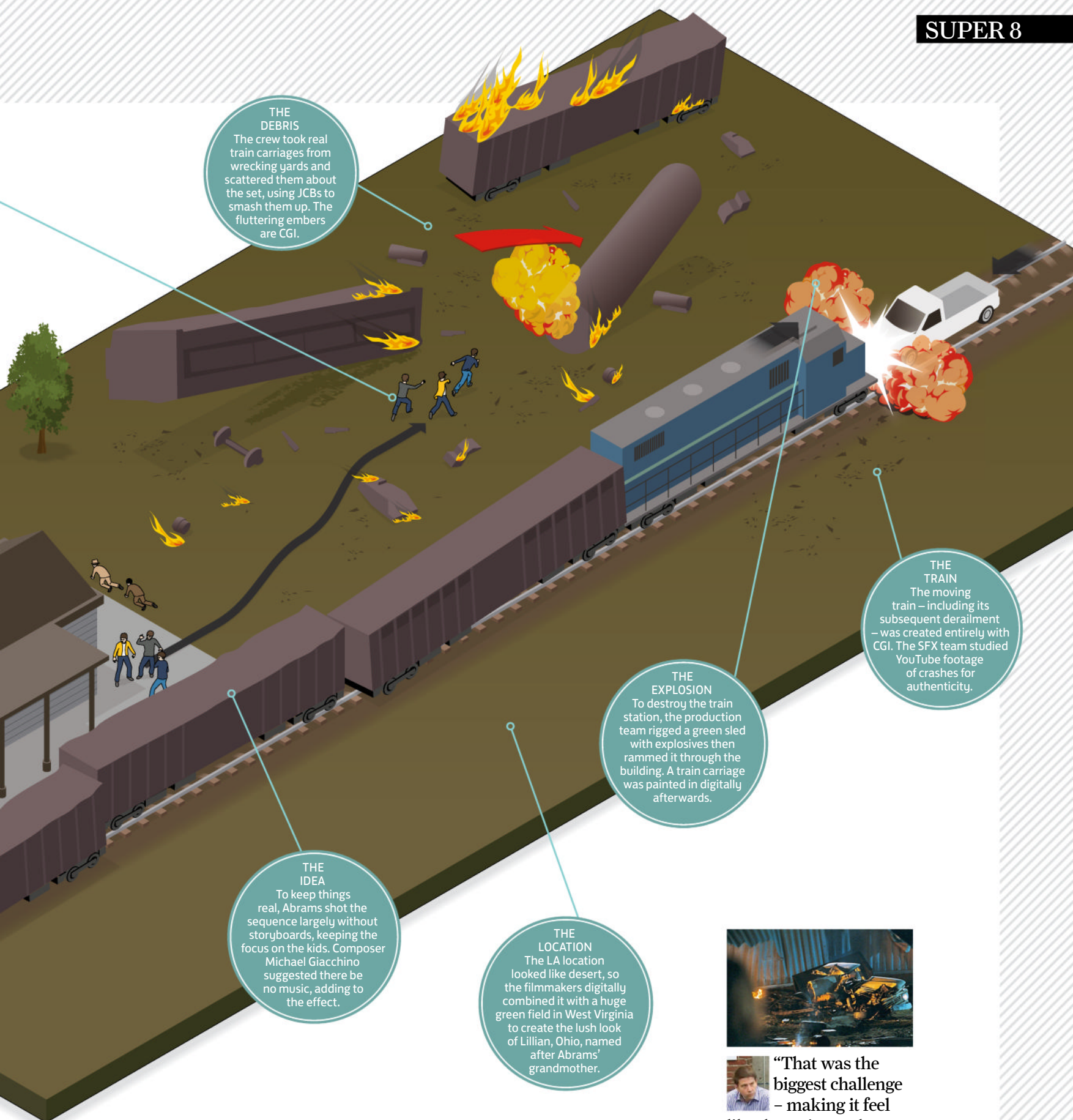


THE SET
The filmmakers built the station and tracks at an LA ranch. They shot the actors with a greenscreen behind them, and added the train in post-production.



“It’s every teenager’s dream to run through explosions, and getting to do it in front of J.J. and Spielberg was amazing.”

Ryan Lee, actor



THE DEBRIS

The crew took real train carriages from wrecking yards and scattered them about the set, using JCBs to smash them up. The fluttering embers are CGI.

THE TRAIN

The moving train – including its subsequent derailment – was created entirely with CGI. The SFX team studied YouTube footage of crashes for authenticity.

THE EXPLOSION

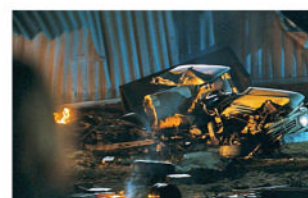
To destroy the train station, the production team rigged a green sled with explosives then rammed it through the building. A train carriage was painted in digitally afterwards.

THE IDEA

To keep things real, Abrams shot the sequence largely without storyboards, keeping the focus on the kids. Composer Michael Giacchino suggested there be no music, adding to the effect.

THE LOCATION

The LA location looked like desert, so the filmmakers digitally combined it with a huge green field in West Virginia to create the lush look of Lillian, Ohio, named after Abrams' grandmother.



“That was the biggest challenge – making it feel like the train crash and the kids’ journey through it is one thing. I think it works. You feel like these kids are running for their lives.”

Kim Libreri, SFX



“I wanted it to be the train crash these kids experienced, the thing they remember, rather than what it was actually like... so it was a larger-than-life, OTT crash.” J.J. Abrams, writer/director

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STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS

Four years after their maiden voyage, the rebooted crew of the Starship Enterprise returned in J.J. Abrams' *Star Trek Into Darkness*. Talking to cast and crew in 2013, we celebrate a bigger and action-ier Trek film for everyone...

WORDS: MATTHEW LEYLAND

J.J. Fact File *Star Trek Into Darkness* (2013)



What? Kirk and his crew return, this time going up against formidable terrorist John Harrison.

Who? Chris Pine, Zachary Quinto, Simon Pegg, Zoe Saldana, Karl Urban, Benedict Cumberbatch.

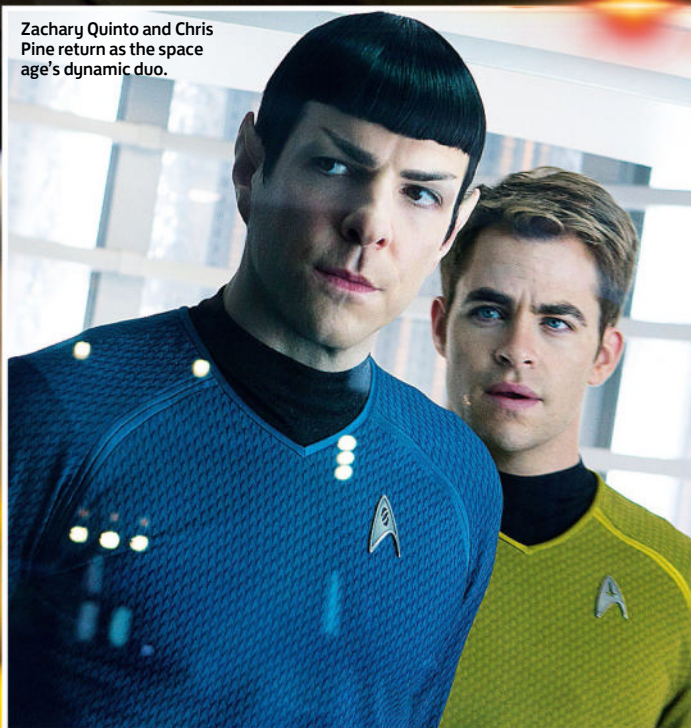
J.J.'s role? Having rebooted the franchise in 2009, Abrams returns to the director's chair.

Any good? After a confident take-off, Abrams keeps the franchise flying with a faster, faster, FASTER sequel that makes for the most thrilling *Star Trek* since *First Contact*.

Our rating: ★★★★★



Zachary Quinto and Chris Pine return as the space age's dynamic duo.





Kirk squares up to "John Harrison" – or is there another name we know him by?

Topic of the day: Alternate Timelines In The World Of *Star Trek*. Your host: writer Damon Lindelof. "We look at it as two different universes," explains the *Lost*/*Prometheus* scribe. "There's the prime universe, all the things that happened in those [older] movies, and then there's the new universe, the one we're working in. The point at which the two universes were split was triggered by Nero and his attack on the USS Kelvin. Anything that happened prior to that moment is identical to what it was in the old universe. One of the things I've always loved about time-travel stories is..."

"I'd like to say to your readers," interjects producer Bryan Burk, "that if your brain is frying and none of this makes any sense, don't worry – I'm one of you." If you haven't seen 2009's *Star Trek* reboot, you won't be in the dark with the follow-up. "None of this is relevant," Burk good-naturedly nods to Lindelof. "This movie is so simple to understand..." The (ahem) logline for *Star Trek Into Darkness* is that it's a sequel that's a



Don't know who these people are? Don't worry, *Into Darkness* won't assume you've seen the last 11 films.

stand-alone. A *Star Trek* movie for people who aren't into *Star Trek*. A paradox, surely, to send Mr. Spock's eyebrow skyward? No, just good blockbuster business sense. "One issue I've had with sequels is that some of them assume you watched the last one literally five minutes ago," says director/producer J.J. Abrams. "We really tried to treat [*Into Darkness*] like it was a brand-new thing, not just assume anyone cares about or knows the characters."

Clearly though, they do – not only because *Star Trek* as a franchise stretches back nearly 50 years and comes with a huge built-in fanbase, but because Abrams' 2009 roll of the dice (starting again from scratch, give or take those parallel universes we won't mention) was a \$385m hit. All the same, Abrams is taking no chances. Even the title, with its lack of



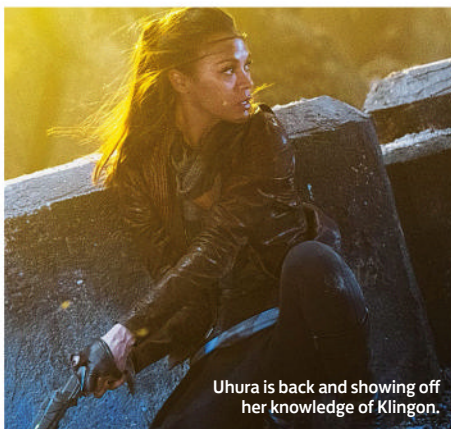
"I had one fight under the bridge in the first movie... this one takes it to a new level"

ZACHARY QUINTO





J.J. with writer Alex Kurtzman.



Uhura is back and showing off her knowledge of Klingon.

numerals, avoids suggesting there's a previous movie you ought to have seen.

'Into Darkness', though... Abrams admits it's "odd". "But my favourite thing about it was the first week it was out there, the fans were going 'Star Trek Into What? I don't understand it. It's stupid,'" he wryly remembers. But a couple of weeks later, it had stuck. What's more, it fits. "It definitely feels like the title's appropriate," he adds. "This is a story about these characters being challenged and tested and taken to a place that's about sacrifice and life and death..." The words *Into Darkness* also leave room for

ambiguity. "I remember there was a movie, *An Innocent Man* [1989], and I was like, doesn't that kinda ruin everything!?" he laughs.

UNDER WRAPS

Abrams has the gift of the gab, but he also, famously, keeps his cards close to his chest. *Lost*, *Cloverfield*, *Super 8*, the upcoming *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*... his resumé is flush with projects that have skilfully managed to stay one step ahead of the spoiler-hunters. And so it goes with *Into Darkness*. The film's first half hour finds principal villain John Harrison (Benedict Cumberbatch) doing villainous things, but his motives remain muddy, while Kirk is still a maverick captain, annoying Spock (even by trying to help him) and getting slapped down by his superiors.

"At the beginning of the film, as in the first one, he's very much driven by wanting to be the best," reveals Chris Pine, reprising his role as the Enterprise's top dog. "That's something he's at war with the whole time, throughout *Into Darkness*." Kirk's big mission – apart from the one that involves new life and new civilisations – is to try and grasp that it's not all about him. "The journey that I think any leader goes on, and which Kirk specifically goes on, is towards selflessness. Pure selflessness," says >>

Starmaker

J.J. Abrams on juggling two of the biggest franchises in the universe...



Imagine becoming custodian of one of the largest, longest-running franchises in entertainment history. What would you do to keep it breathing? "I think it's about being true to the spirit with which the original was created, and then having an ear to the vernacular of today," says Abrams. "It's about understanding and respecting where it came from and taking that with you every step forward."

He's specifically talking about his approach to *Star Trek*, but you can imagine much the same wisdom will be applied to his following gig: *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Abrams' appointment as *Episode VII*'s director/producer was something of a surprise – he originally appeared to rule himself out ("I'll be going as a paying moviegoer") – but makes terrific sense, given his love of the Lucas-verse and his flair for franchise rejuvenation (not only *Trek* but *Mission: Impossible*, too).

He'll admit, though, that taking on another sci-fi juggernaut wasn't a snap decision. "It was something that just felt, given I was in the middle of working on *Star Trek*, an impossibility," he recalls. "It wasn't until I met with [new Lucasfilm president] Kathleen Kennedy that the idea of doing it felt remotely possible." By this stage too he was confident that *Into Darkness* had hit warp speed. "I knew that the work that needed to get done on *Star Trek* was getting done," he says. "I would never want to abandon a job that I was working on, that I care about so much, to take on another one."

Naturally, Abrams isn't ready to spill any beans on *Episode VII*, simply describing it as a "surreal opportunity" that he intends to make the most of. "It's an incredibly meaningful world to so many people," he says. "But we have an amazing team that's working together, and we want to make sure we're doing it right."

While he won't be directing the third *Star Trek* picture, *Star Trek Beyond*, he's still on board the Enterprise, looking ahead to future voyages. "We have a lot of ideas," he offers. "Nothing I feel that I'd be ready to talk about, but we have some stuff that could be a lot of fun if Paramount and the fans demand that we continue." In the meantime, does having two *Treks* under his belt make him feel more confident about boldly going to a(nother) galaxy far, far away? "I'm not sure that I feel more confident," he confesses. "But I do feel incredibly excited..."

2010 - 2015



Simon Pegg as Scotty battles with his conscience.



Pine, alluding to some “very difficult choices” that will impact on the Enterprise’s returning-in-full crew (Zachary Quinto as Spock, Karl Urban as Bones, Zoe Saldana’s Uhura, John Cho’s Sulu, Anton Yelchin’s Chekov).

Darkness ahoy – even for chief engineer Montgomery ‘Scotty’ Scott (Simon Pegg). “People make the assumption he’s going to be the comic relief because it’s me playing him,” says Pegg, “but in this movie he goes through some serious stuff. He has moments of comedy, but I didn’t want him to be a particularly comic character.”

FUNNY MAN

Conversely, Benedict Cumberbatch wouldn’t have minded a larger slice of the funny. “Yeah, I would’ve liked a few more jokes,” mock-sighs the *Sherlock* man. “But that’s a small complaint. There is humour, but I didn’t want to be too cutesy with it.” ‘Cutesy’ seems like the last word that would be used to describe John Harrison, a “psychological terrorist” and “shadow self” to Kirk who is, in summary, “quite an awesome character”.

“If you’re a *Star Trek* fan you’ll be very happy because there’s a lot of stuff for you in it,” promises Abrams. “But this is not a *Star*

Trek fan movie. It was made for people like myself” – a confessed non-*Trek* fan, preferring that other ‘*Star*’ franchise he’s now shepherding – “who love going to the movies and seeing spectacle and emotion and hopefully exciting, touching stories.”

Into Darkness is unashamed popcorn entertainment: 3D, IMAX, swathes of CGI. All of which it handles with care. “This universe lends itself to 3D,” argues Pine. “You think about space travel. You think about warp speed. You think about the things that are naturally moving in this universe, and they lend themselves to this magnification.” Like an alien spear, chucked right between the viewer’s eyes in the opening set-piece. We’re on Nibiru – a Class M planet, according to the caption – with a becloaked Kirk and Bones, being furiously chased by white-faced natives. Meanwhile, a volcano’s about to go off. It’s a statement of intent: “It’s just the beginning. You haven’t even seen the most involved or most exhilarating sequences yet, by any stretch,” enthuses Pine. The first film had action, but this has *action*.

“There’s a lot more in this movie, especially for my character,” says Spock alter ego Zachary Quinto, as chilled in the flesh as he is uptight on screen. “I had that one fight under the bridge in the first movie, but this one takes it to a new level. It’s one of the longest stretches of action I’ve done on film.” Abrams says it’s “so crazy” how big the film is in comparison with its not-small predecessor. The number of locations is almost twice as many as last time,

“From the beginning you have the threat of losing one or more of the crew”

J.J. ABRAMS



Cumberbatch's stunt double bursts through the glass after being chased by Spock.



he reckons, and plenty of those are real places. "In a movie like this there's the potential for a lot of fake-looking stuff, which is why we shot a bunch of action scenes on actual city streets. It gives you real atmosphere, real sunlight."

But the name on the tin is *Into Darkness*. How far does it go? "This is going to sound ridiculous considering what the title of the movie is," confesses Lindelof, "but I think one of the pitfalls we identified was that we didn't want the film to be overtly dark." Though it's a movie you can enjoy without the aid of a Klingon-English dictionary, it doesn't renege on *Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry's essential spirit of optimism. "Trek is above and beyond everything, an incredibly hopeful vision of the future," says co-writer Alex Kurtzman. "That said, your heroes are only as good as your villains, and you want them to challenge your heroes in a way that takes them to a new place."

The stakes are higher this time, believes Abrams, because of the family dynamic now in place on the Enterprise. "You know, when you meet someone brand new, the idea of losing that person would be a real bummer, but it wouldn't necessarily break your heart for the rest of your life," he says. "But these are people that are now connected. In the first film you had this mission that was dramatic, but relatively impersonal. Here, they're thrust into an adventure where from the beginning you have the threat of losing one or more of the crew. So the 'darkness' is not just a general thing. It's much more personal."



Paint it batch

23rd century bad guy Benedict Cumberbatch talks close combat, over-eating and gulpy moments...

Who is John Harrison?

He's a psychological terrorist. He's someone who's incredibly motivated and has a reason and a purpose behind his actions, although those actions are pretty abhorrent. He and Kirk both come at a power-structure problem, but from two very different political angles. He's also a kick-arse warrior.

Do villains have more fun?

As a rule, yes. But Chris' [Pine] journey in this film is phenomenal. And while I'm in awe of what Andrew [Scott] did as Moriarty [on *Sherlock*], I wouldn't say he necessarily had more fun than me!

Were you a *Trek* fan as a kid?

I wasn't really fanatical about anything as a kid. But I was very aware of all generations [of *Trek*], and most importantly I'd seen J.J.'s film and absolutely loved it. I was brought to it unwillingly I guess, but it blew me away. I was in tears in the first five minutes.

You had to prepare quickly for *Into Darkness*...

We worked at furious speed from the outside in. I had a lot of help from make-up and costume people. It was a late casting – there were 10 days between getting the job and being on a plane to meet the producers and J.J. That was quite a gulpy moment.

Had J.J. seen *Sherlock*?

Yes. And he was so complimentary about it, like "I thought you could do anything after that." Which I'm very humbled by. So I went in with him on my side.

How was your first day on set?

Terrifying. I felt like the outsider, the new kid – because of my own fear, not because of my welcome, which was very inclusive. It was like, "Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to... BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH! Whoo!" All this sort of razzamatazz. Which was pure love. Pure f*cking love.

What was the biggest challenge?

The over-eating was the nasty side. The 4,000 calories a day for four months. But I really enjoyed working out. I did lots of close-combat training. [Harrison's] hands and body are his weapons.

So lots of fighting?

Lots of running as well. An awful lot of running. There were [physical] challenges I hadn't done before. I remember one scene where I was waiting till two in the morning to be dragged across the floor of a set at 60 mph on a wire.

Scary?

It was scary. But so thrilling. In character, my reaction was "I'm completely in control. I'm fine. I can do this." But as an actor I wanted to get up and go, "God, did anyone see that?!?" It was like being a kid at the fairground. *Matthew Leyland*

Star Trek Into Darkness

The abridged script

WORDS: ALI GRAY

FADE IN

EXT. PLANET NIBIRU
Intergalactic do-gooders
CHRIS PINE and
KARL URBAN are being
chased by the savage
inhabitants of a distant
planet in the midst of
a volcanic eruption.

CHRIS PINE

Just because I'm
Captain Kirk doesn't
mean I can't be Indiana
Jones [ducks spear].
Spock, where are we on
stopping the whole
volcano thing?

ZACHARY QUINTO

[Inside the volcano]
It went tits up,
Captain. I'm trapped and
saving me would violate

the Prime Directive.
Leave me here to die!

CHRIS PINE

What a dilemma! You
leave me with no choice
but to... rescue you in
our massive starship,
with no consequences.

ZACHARY QUINTO

I guess that one was
kind of a no-brainer.

Class swot ZACHARY
QUINTO dubs in CHRIS
PINE to Starfleet boss
PETER WELLER, who
demotes him to BRUCE
GREENWOOD'S bitch.

BRUCE GREENWOOD

Blah blah blah,
responsibility!



Waffle waffle waffle
recklessness! Loose
cannon! Liability! Etc!

CHRIS PINE

For the love of Gorn,
Shatner never got
lectured like this.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO
BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH
engineers an explosion
at Starfleet HQ.

PETER WELLER

We're in crisis mode:
this bastard blew
up our library.

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH

Now you're all gathered
together, I'll kill most
of you with lasers,
despite obviously knowing
how to make bombs!

BRUCE GREENWOOD

[Dying] Avenge... me!
Responsibly!

CHRIS PINE

I'll catch this son of
a bitch or so help
me, I'll get several
members of my crew killed
in the process.

ALICE EVE

Check out my tits!

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH
beams to the KLINGON
planet to hide. PETER
WELLER orders CHRIS PINE
to take the ENTERPRISE
and go seek, armed with
SUSPECT PLOT DEVICES.

CHRIS PINE

Do we fire these torpedoes
and risk starting a war?
We'll find out after this
chase sequence!

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH

I surrender. Your boss
is evil and hid 72 of
my people in your

torpedoes. Oh, and
my real name is...

CHRIS PINE

We know, we read it on the
internet a year ago. Let's
board Pete's megaship and
get some vengeance. No
betrayals!

CHRIS PINE is betrayed
instantly and PETER WELLER
is killed. Both ships
plummet to Earth.

SIMON PEGG

I cannae maintain the ship's
power, we'll have to turn
it off and on! It would
be fatal for whoever
flicks the switch...

CHRIS PINE

Did someone say
'heroic sacrifice'?

CHRIS PINE heroically
sacrifices himself by
kicking some metal. He
saves the ship but dies.

ZACHARY QUINTO

[Taking chase]
KHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAN!

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH

I didn't kill him?! Although
I did succeed in my plan to
destroy Starfleet. One-nil!

KARL URBAN

I know I said I need
Khan's blood to bring back
Kirk, but I just realised
72 of his mates are in our
fridge. Duh!

CHRIS PINE

I'm alive! Now we've got
Khan, let's boldly go where
no Star Trek movie has gone
before.

ZACHARY QUINTO

Isn't that what we said
before? [Raises eyebrow.]

END





Boris Kodjoe and Gugu Mbatha-Raw star as ex-CIA couple Steven and Samantha Bloom.

Undercovers

Espionage gets young and sexy.

When? 2010.

What? Former CIA husband and wife duo are tempted out of their catering business and back into the world of undercover espionage.

Who? Gugu Mbatha-Raw, Boris Kodjoe, Carter MacIntyre, Ben Schwartz.

J.J.'s role? Abrams created and executive-produced this with Josh Reims. He also wrote the first three episodes with Reims and directed the pilot.

J.J. says: "I think the goal was to create a show that felt sort of like a throwback – sort of a comedic action adventure, romantic comedy. To do something that was in the spirit of *Hart To Hart*, but updated."

Any good? With highly likeable stars, J.J. in the driving seat and a premise that worked pretty well in *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*, this show should have been more of a success. Critics praised its slick action and energetic, playful tone but despite their screen presence, casting unknowns and opting for a lightness of tone rather than gritty urgency may have spelled goodbye for these spies.

Our rating: ★★★





Harrison Ford and Rachel McAdams take differing approaches to fieldwork fashion.

© Kobal 12)

Morning Glory

Waking up with Harrison Ford...

When? 2010.

What? Perky comedy following TV producer Becky as she attempts to run a morning show despite its warring presenters.

Who? Rachel McAdams, Harrison Ford, Diane Keaton, Patrick Wilson, Jeff Goldblum.

J.J.'s role: Just a few years before teaming up with Ford again on *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, Abrams produced him in this comedy, financed by Bad Robot Productions.

Any good? Though it doesn't exactly break the mould, *Morning Glory* is a sunny comedy with likeable turns from McAdams and Keaton – while Ford excels as the grump with a heart of gold. A couple of laugh-out-loud moments keep it ticking along.

Our rating: ★★ ★



Mission: Impossible – Ghost Protocol

Fourth time's the charm
for Tom Cruise and co...

When? 2011.

What? Ethan Hunt returns for another impossible mission, going rogue after the IMF is shut down.

Who? Tom Cruise, Jeremy Renner, Simon Pegg, Paula Patton.

J.J.'s role: Too busy working on other projects to direct another *Mission: Impossible* (after rebooting the franchise with its third entry), Abrams oversaw the project as producer alongside Cruise.

J.J. says: "It's really fun. It's got a fun kind of intensity to it. That's Brad [Bird, director]. It's the biggest one by far in terms of the stuff that happens in it... Tom Cruise did, I think, five days of wirework outside the [Burj Khalifa], that is so insane, you cannot believe the insurance company let him do it."

Any good? A few damp squibs aside, director Brad Bird's sensibilities make for the most animated *Mission* to date. Don't see in IMAX if you're a vertigo sufferer, though...

Our rating: ★★★★★

He might be one of the world's biggest film stars, but he's not afraid to do his own stunts.

J.J. Fact File
Alcatraz (2012)



What? A mystery set in and around Alcatraz prison. In 1963, prisoners and guards disappear – only to suddenly reappear in the modern day...

Who? Sarah Jones, Jorge Garcia, Sam Neill, Parminder Nagra, Jonny Coyne, Jason Butler Harner.

J.J.'s role? Produced through Bad Robot Productions, Abrams worked on the show as executive producer, and contributed its theme tune.

Any good? Though there are shades of *Lost* in its island-set mystery, *Alcatraz* has a strong handle on its own mystery, and offers fascinating insight into the history of the real prison. Some great performances, too. It's a shame the show never got to develop its mythology with a second season.

Our rating: ★★★

ALCA

Ready for an
island adventure.



We go behind the scenes at J.J.'s
time-warping prison saga.

WORDS: TARA BENNETT

TRAZ

2010 - 2015



“I was really taken with the idea of exploring 1960s Alcatraz”

LIZ SARNOFF

Lasting only one season, *Alcatraz* was a 13-episode curio that conjured a serious sense of déjà vu. An equal parts procedural/sci-fi mythology drama, it was mostly set on an infamous, forbidding island. It involved time travel, told a good portion of its story through flashback narrative, co-starred Jorge Garcia (the once and forever Hurley) and was showrun by former *Lost* executive producer/writer Liz Sarnoff.

People in the business of making and buying TV shows always tell development teams to “write to your strengths”. Audiences like familiarity, so it makes sense that Abrams and Bad Robot engineered *Alcatraz*’s premise to include some of the most compelling elements of *Lost*’s DNA. They then handed it off to Sarnoff so she could run with the framework and craft those elements into something new.

After an exhausting five-year-run on *Lost*, jumping right back into TV – this time running her own series – wasn’t exactly on

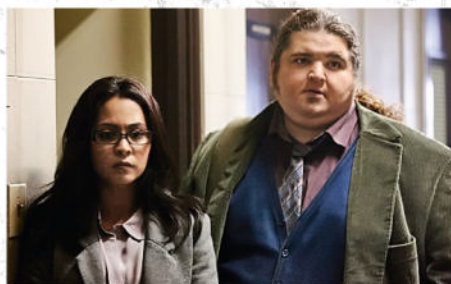
Sarnoff’s immediate ‘to-do list’. But as she told us back at the start of the project, before Fox cancelled it in the wake of slipping ratings, Bad Robot wooed her with the *Alcatraz* pitch during the last season of *Lost* and she was instantly smitten.

TIME COP

“The idea that they presented me with was so good I just couldn’t walk away,” Sarnoff shares. Initially the series concerned a San Francisco cop teaming with a professor to investigate the strange case of 1960s-era Alcatraz inmates showing up in the present day. In Sarnoff’s hands, that concept was fleshed out to incorporate more of the prison’s past, creating a unique procedural where a core team of three – Rebecca Madsen (Sarah Jones), Diego “Doc” Soto (Garcia) and Agent Emerson Hauser (Sam Neill) – track down and re-arrest the time-travelling prisoners wreaking havoc in present day San Francisco.

“I was really taken with the idea of exploring 1960s Alcatraz,” Sarnoff explains.

Jason Butler Harner
as Alcatraz's Deputy
Warden E.B. Tiller.



"When the idea was brought to me the show was not going to use flashbacks as a regular structural tool. I thought if we're going to do a show called *Alcatraz* we better be in Alcatraz and we better be there when the place was up and running and the coolest guys were there."

POWERFUL STORY ENGINE

Given the networks' reticence to develop SF shows that rely too much on episodic arcs, Sarnoff found a way to create a format that would be standalone and yet slowly build its own mythology. "I feel like it's a hybrid. Even though we're catching a bad guy every week, we're still telling the story of the mythology and what happened at Alcatraz. The flashbacks are very important to say something was going on there. It's the balance of procedural and mythological storytelling. When a show gets swallowed up by its mythology, it's not my favourite thing to write or watch. You know *Lost* as a show had no story engine whatsoever, so every week we were literally starting from scratch. I feel

very blessed that this show has a very strong and powerful story engine.

"Every week one of these guys is coming back and their story is big. It's about what they're doing in the present day – and they're doing bad stuff in the present day – and we also have a flashback to what they were doing in Alcatraz. These guys now have a free pass because they are set loose in the world without any constraints. Nobody knows who they are and, theoretically, they don't exist. Almost all of them are presumed dead. They have a get out of jail free card and can do anything they want. Tracking them down keeps our guys pretty busy and then we have to find ways to further the overarching story and the character stories with that."

The characters the writers developed are the Fed-led recovery team, cobbled together in the pilot by the enigmatic Agent Hauser. "I chose to make him the police officer that arrived on the night of the original disappearance, who actually experienced this enormous trauma on his first day. He's spent



Sarah Jones

We chat to the actress behind Rebecca Madsen, a smart San Francisco cop who's enlisted to assist with the recoveries.

How did you prep for this role?

I read a couple of stories about the inmates from the inmates' perspectives. I didn't want to get into the history of Alcatraz too much because that's not of interest to Rebecca. She wants to know about these prisoners and what they were like. I also watched a fantastic documentary about former prisoners who went back to the island. They talked about their experiences and that was fascinating. As for the cop training, I got with a trainer to box, and I run. I run because there will be chase scenes so I've got to get my legs in running shape!

The show is unique in that it's a cop show set in the present day and also in the '60s. Which intrigues you more?

I think the simple folklore of Alcatraz on its own is interesting enough. But because there will be flashbacks, you are going to go into that prison every week. You're going to see what life was like inside Alcatraz and that subject alone intrigues me.

Rebecca's fiancé Jimmy (Santiago Cabrera) is also a cop. Is it safe to say this new case of hers is going to cause them issues?

Well, I think we both understand where we're coming from but we don't know the entire past yet. I don't think we need to, so we're just going with it and being comfortable with each other as two people who are engaged and also associates.

Do you know much about what's to come for Rebecca?

No, and I think it will help for the viewers as they come along on the journey. The less we know the more of a surprise it is to us, as much as the audience, and I think that resonates.

>>



“The character grew exponentially just by the idea of having Jorge in it”

LIZ SARNOFF

his life waiting to find out what happened.” Hauser hand-picks Rebecca for his team because of her investigative prowess and her inherent interest in *The Rock*, where her grandfather and surrogate uncle, Ray Archer (Robert Forster), worked as prison guards. Soto rounds out the team as the good-natured civilian author/expert on the prison and its former residents.

Sarnoff says that making the three leads resonate with audiences was one of her priorities. She wanted viewers to feel an attachment to their lives, not just the crime-fighting. “I felt very strongly that Rebecca needed to have a personal tie to Alcatraz so the mythology becomes a character. If a character is talking about mythology it’s very dry. But if she’s talking about a grandfather who she never knew it suddenly becomes very evocative and emotional for the character. It’s what I

tried to do with all of them in some ways; enrich their backstories and give them all a personal connection to the place so that we weren’t just talking about things that happen or people or moments that happened to them.”

BEAUTIFUL & BALLSY

The other piece of that puzzle was casting the right actors. Sarnoff admits she’s impressed by the calibre of talent the show attracted. She rewrote and tailored the character of Soto to Garcia’s talents. “When I heard Jorge might be interested in taking a series, I completely took that character and revamped him. The character grew exponentially just by the idea of having Jorge in it.” With Neill, Sarnoff says the premise also hooked him much like it did for her. “He was in town for a day and we were able to meet with him. I was so amazed that he wanted to do this and was

Michael Eklund as Kit Nelson, chatting to Rebecca's grandfather Madsen (David Hoflin).



interested. He's very excited about this character and he just brought it to life in a way that was better than I could have ever imagined." Of the three, Jones is perhaps the least known, but Sarnoff was confident the actress would wow audiences. "I had seen a colour here or there that I liked [with other actresses] but not the whole package and Sarah was just the whole package from day one," Sarnoff enthuses. "She was strong and solid, yet at the same time young and beautiful. When she looks at Sam and delivers some of those lines, she's ballsy."

As for the prisoners that return, Sarnoff says they had a blast going into the real history of the prison to inspire the stories for their lawless criminals. "The whole writing staff is pretty much obsessed with Alcatraz," she laughs. "I started writing the pilot over a year ago and in that year I read probably

15 to 20 books on Alcatraz. The real stories are amazing and heartbreaking, compelling, sad and funny. While we love all the original stuff, every week we try to make original guys. Jack Sylvane, who is the bad guy in the pilot, was a compilation of a lot of different guys that I had read about and particularly liked and felt akin to."

Alcatraz premiered on the Fox network on 16 January 2012 with an impressive 10.6 million viewers. However, by the time its finale aired two months later, viewing figures had dropped to just 4.75 million. While those figures were still respectable for a prime time genre show, and *USA Today* said the show contained "twists and surprises that are enjoyable and not enervating," on 9 May 2012, Fox decided to cancel the show. A shame, because it had real promise. It seems the mysteries of Alcatraz will now stay just that.



Forge Garcia

Garcia plays civilian Diego 'Doc' Soto, a comic shop owner and Alcatraz expert.

What's with your proclivity for starring in island-based TV shows?

It's a completely different kind of island! There is a lot less plant life.

Are the shows alike at all?

It's actually easier to say how alike [*Alcatraz*] is to *Lost* in the sense that both are about an island, they were both shrouded in mystery and there is a guy who is on this show that looks a lot like a guy that was on *Lost*. That's pretty much where the similarities stop [laughs].

Did you have any concerns about being on another enigmatic show?

No. I trust these people and they make the television I want to watch. To be a part of this is a great pleasure. And I do know that the producers had a meeting at one point with Fox execs with their show bible, so they do know the big picture story. I have gotten used to working in the dark and I dig it.

Did you feel compelled to research Doc Soto's world?

Not really, as far as playing a comic book shop owner. Just hanging around that little shop they created, I got that place and could do it easy. As far as being an Alcatraz expert, the script pretty much told me what to say and I just had to deliver it with confidence so that was all I needed.

How was it shooting on Alcatraz?

We got to go to places on Alcatraz that other people weren't allowed to go at the time so it was kind of fun and made us feel special.

Are there any secrets about Doc that you're excited for fans to discover?

I got a little hint of something that kind of revealed more about why my character is so obsessed with the criminal element and I'm excited about that. It comes pretty early in the first season.



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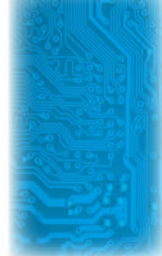
2010 - 2015

RACKIN

ALMOST HUMAN

Robocops and future tech collide in a buddy cop show with a difference.

WORDS: [TARA BENNETT](#)



The MX-43 androids were replacements for the flawed models of Dorian's generation.

J.J. Fact File

Almost Human (2013 - 2014)



What? A sci-fi series set in a future where police officers are paired with combat-model androids.

Who? Karl Urban, Michael Ealy, Minka Kelly, Mackenzie Crook.

J.J.'s role: Produced under the Bad Robot banner, the show was originally pitched to Abrams by creator J.H. Wyman. Abrams wasn't involved in the show's day-to-day maintenance, but he was available, in his words, to "read scripts, give notes [and] watch cuts".

J.J. says: "I'm more of an optimist. So the idea of this show is not my default vision of things. I'm not as optimistic as [*Star Trek* creator] Gene Roddenberry was. I fall somewhere in the middle. But as a romantic, I like to think things are going to get bigger rather than worse."

Any good? That *Almost Human* was cancelled after just 13 episodes was a small-screen tragedy. Sharply written and featuring some great performances (Urban's on great, gripe-y form), its muscular action and timely look at the way tech shapes our lives should have made it a massive hit. Shame it never got the chance to find its audience.

Our rating: ★★★★★

It's not easy being a futuristic genre show that straddles the world of police procedurals and geeky mythology. Trying to equally please those who want the simple investment of case-of-the-week storytelling – led by human cop John Kennex (Karl Urban) and his synthetic partner, Dorian (Michael Ealy) – versus those that worship at the altar of knotty, ongoing narratives is an alchemy that's incredibly tricky. But *Almost Human* creator and executive producer J.H. Wyman is used to finding that middle ground, having wrestled it into submission on his previous series, *Fringe*.

That's not to say that *Almost Human's* arrival was easy. Fox aired the first seven episodes out of order to front-load the most standalone episodes for new viewers, pushing Wyman's mythology stories deeper into the season. The strategy has kept the ratings stable, but critics grumbled that the formula held back the show's true potential. Wyman doesn't necessarily disagree with that assessment, as he tells us in an exclusive phone interview from his Santa Monica office, months before his show was sadly cancelled after just 13 episodes.

"There are so many great things I want to tell in the mythology and I'm only now starting to feel it has this platform to do it. In the beginning the network wants standalones, and with every fibre of my body I'm saying, 'I can understand that but you need mythology as well.' The way we attacked the first order is we're just presenting cases that are interesting – you understand the world and the guys. But the perfect episode for me was episode two ('Skin'), which was actually number five, the one about the sex bots. Episode 12 is also very much my design as well, where you can examine great, thematic things and have some >>



Michael Ealy plays Dorian, an older android model designed to be as human as possible.

fun. This show should really be about something. To me, that stuff is really interesting and the bones of the show.

"It's where I live as a storyteller," Wyman continues. "I'm trying to get to a place where every episode is sort of like [*Fringe's* seminal episode] 'White Tulip', where there is a very emotional story but it's also an intriguing case. I feel like now I can identify what are the animals and minerals that go into an episode of *Almost Human* that makes it pass my litmus test. The race has been to find that fingerprint. And the way I want things to go is that now we really start to break some good old-fashioned mythology that will knock your socks off."

THE FUTURE IS FUN

Wyman says a big part of the appeal of *Almost Human* was the chance to do a show that was lighter and more "fun" than *Fringe*. And Wyman believes his vision for the show largely remained intact as they mined the show's

The bickering, between Kennex and Dorian quickly emerged as one of the show's strengths

premise. "It's changed slightly, but also developed in ways that I wasn't certain it would go; it went in that direction but it went there organically," he explains. "You always find out different things about the show as you are making it. It tells you where it wants to go. The humour has become a much bigger part of it. The tone of it is very fun, even more so between John and Dorian."

The bickering, begrudging rapport between Kennex and Dorian quickly emerged as one of the show's strengths. While many expected them to be oil and water partners, Wyman says that approach was quickly retired in the writers' room. "[Karl and Michael] are the greatest actors and have this incredible comradeship and chemistry. We decided we didn't want to go into the realm of a real difficult journey between John and Dorian as friends, as partners and in their relationship because people enjoy them so much. Everybody

wanted to go into the direction of what was really working and that relationship started to come alive when we put more humour into it. You get these guys bringing out in each other things that are fun to watch. They're both trying to find their positions in this crazy world and that's more interesting to us than 'Are they going to get along well?' Of course, they are going to get along – it's a buddy cop show!"

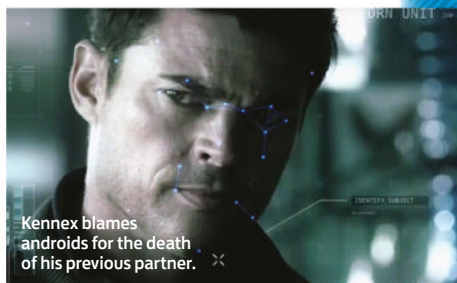
Returning to the topic of how the show's mythology was expected to blossom, Wyman says the threats would be amplified from multiple directions. Part of that would be the shadowy InSyndicate, which was introduced in the pilot but was never given a chance to return. Wyman teases, "The InSyndicate is one of many bad groups that are very dangerous in their own way. You don't want to fight with them but we also don't want to make them so bad that they are a moustache-twirling Big Bad. I really want to get away from that because it's very clear the world is the Big Bad – and the technology in it.

"And then what's the Wall about?" asks Wyman, referencing the place mentioned in the show's pilot where humans have crossed in the restricted zone. "What's the divide about and what's on the other side? What happened and what is going on really? We start to question that and really get into it."

ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

Wyman also promised an expansion of the impressive tech that permeates the streets, architecture and especially the crime scenes at





Karl Urban

Meet the man behind John Kennex.

Kennex is a bit of a grump. Does that make you laugh?

Yeah, what I most love about Kennex is his temperament. Often, he can be kind of prickly on the surface but as we get to spend more time with him in the show we get to see a real softer side to him. I particularly like his relationship with Dorian.

Your rapport with Dorian is really the soul of the show. Do you and Michael Ealy riff off the script to get that natural dynamic?

For the most part what you see on screen is what's on the page. We're really blessed with having an amazing team of writers headed by Joel. So we will do what's in the script and on the page, but then also we have the freedom to try one for ourselves. Michael and I do take that and it's been really amazing to see that part of the process. It's certainly opened up avenues for the writers to explore directions, which may have not been previously considered.

The show demands a lot from you. What's the biggest challenge?

For me, one of the aspects that I find most challenging is the physicality of it. We shot an absolutely amazing sequence last week where Michael was fighting with another robot. I was fighting with another cop. It was absolutely amazing, but I tell you, the next day both of us couldn't move.

What fascinates you in terms of the show's world-building?

Most definitely I'm taken by the technology. We're dealing with concepts that obviously aren't present in our world. Concepts like Dorian, a fully functioning lifelike humanistic robot that in many ways is actually more human than my character. To me that's probably the most amazing piece of technology in this whole show.

the heart of Kennex and Dorian's investigations. "What I'm trying to do is imagine where we're going and no one can say that we're wrong. The idea is finding the tipping point on certain technologies and asking where that's going to go. What are some of the cautionary tales of the things they promise? What are some of the bad things people don't see around the corner? To go down the road and propose the 'what-ifs' and the cautionary tales and the morality of it all, is so interesting to me."

Dorian's unique amalgam of android bells and whistles mixed with empathetic humanity would also have been explored in some unexpected ways. Wyman hints, "I do have something very concrete that I would like to do. It involves the life that Dorian had before he was decommissioned. It's really interesting because these robots are supposed to be memory-wiped, but then they wake up and they're not all that wiped. The great thing about the DRNs is that humans don't really understand what they've created. They know it's a being, but it's the growing on its own that they didn't expect. So they've boiled it down to, 'It's not that it didn't work, but it worked too well.'"

The demands of the job would also continue

to reveal the kind of man and detective Kennex is post-coma. "I think it's much more difficult to be a cop in the future," Wyman says. "It's no secret I have a tremendous amount of respect for law enforcement and people that risk their lives daily to protect the freedoms we all enjoy. In the future, it will be that much worse as a vocation with bullets that can go around corners. It's only for the brave and those that understand it's a calling in life. With that comes great responsibility, which is where I am looking at criminals who – without a judge and jury – seem to not be worth being on the planet. Maybe there is a grey area about how we deal with things."

Wyman was cautiously optimistic about getting an expanded pick-up from Fox, though that hope was ultimately dashed when, in March

2014, the network decided not to renew the show for a second season. "Hopefully we will get the chance to be able to really roll up our sleeves and get close up. I think it's what everybody really wants but sometimes it takes a little bit of time," Wyman said before that news had dropped. With an excited laugh, he added, "I seriously have like five years of a mythology I would really love to dig into." Sadly, he never got the chance.





Revolution

A whole new world...

When? 2012 - 2014.

What? Post-apocalyptic sci-fi set in the year 2027. Fifteen years after an electrical blackout that killed the world's technology, the Matheson family struggle to survive. The show was cancelled after two seasons, but the second season's cliffhanger will be resolved in a four-part digital comic-book series.

Who? Billy Burke, Tracy Spiridakos, Giancarlo Esposito, Zak Orth, David Lyons, Daniella Alonso.

J.J.'s role? Eric Kripke (of *Supernatural*) created the series, and pitched it to J.J., who exec produced through Bad Robot. J.J. also composed the theme music.

Any good? Kripke described *Revolution* as a "romantic swashbuckling sci-fi adventure", and the show often has moments of brilliance as it explores a world without technology. Compelling in places, but uneven overall. It's unsurprising it only last two seasons.

Our rating: ★★☆☆

Getting to grips with a world without technology.



Jamie Chung played Janice Channing, trying to protect young Bo (Johnny Sequoyah).

Believe

Girl power rules in a short-lived series...

When? 2013 - 2014.

What? Fantasy drama series following young psychic Bo as she's hunted by a shady government organisation. Though *Believe* was intended as a mid-season replacement, only 12 of its 13 episodes aired in the US before its cancellation.

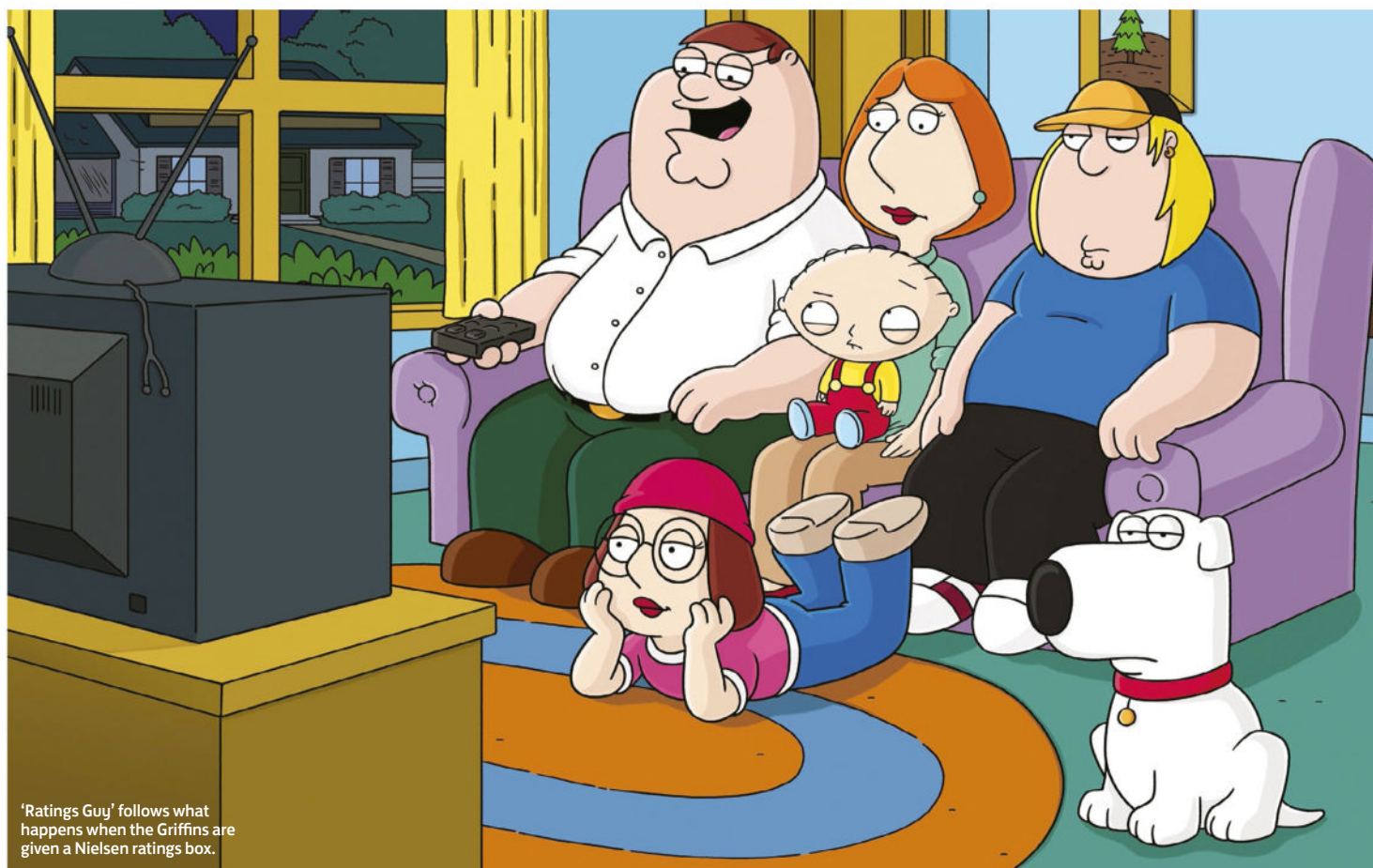
Who? Jake McLaughlin, Johnny Sequoyah, Jamie Chung, Kyle MacLachlan, Delroy Lindo.

J.J.'s role? *Believe* was created by Alfonso Cuarón and Markus Friedman, with J.J. exec producing through Bad Robot (alongside Bryan Burk, Jonas Pate and Hans Tobeason).

Any good? Despite a strong performance by young Sequoyah, *Believe's* non-linear narrative had some viewers scratching their heads, while others noted similarities between the show's premise and *Touch* (the short-lived 2012 series from Tim Kring) and Stephen King's *Firestarter*. Given the involvement of Cuarón and Abrams, many expected the show to be more innovative than it turned out to be, and were disappointed by the familiar storytelling.

Our rating: ★★☆☆





'Ratings Guy' follows what happens when the Griffins are given a Nielsen ratings box.

Family Guy

Abrams gets animated.

A sure sign that anybody's made it in the media is when they're immortalised in animated form. President Obama in *The Simpsons*. Michael Jackson in *South Park*. And in 2012,

J.J. Abrams made his cartoon debut in a season 11 episode of *Family Guy*.

Titled 'Ratings Guy', the episode sees Peter Griffin offering newsreader Tom Tucker advice

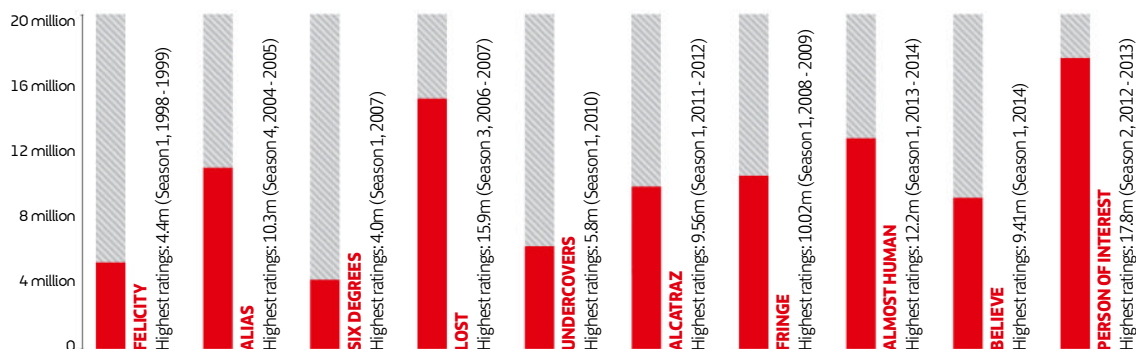
on how to improve his show, then doing the same for shows like *The Biggest Loser* and *Cougar Town*. Sadly, those changes ruin TV as we know it, and Peter turns to the Television Producers Guild for help repairing the damage.

Among the Guild members are J.J. Abrams, whose pitch is somewhat unusual. "I've got an alien that goes back in time and encounters a koala bear in an Eastern-European town," he says. Peter's response? "Totally confused. Do it."



Ratings guy

Abrams' shows have secured some of the highest audience figures in television. Here's how they all add up...



Caviezel and Emerson with Kevin Chapman and Taraji P. Henson, who play NYPD officers in the show.



J.J. Fact File

Person Of Interest (2011 - present)



What? Sci-fi crime drama in which a former CIA agent who's presumed dead uses a new surveillance system dubbed The Machine to prevent violent crimes before they happen.

Who? Michael Emerson, Jim Caviezel, Taraji P. Henson, Kevin Chapman, Amy Acker.

J.J.'s role? As with many of his other shows, Abrams is on board as an executive producer alongside Jonathan Nolan, Bryan Burk and Greg Plageman.

Any good? A sci-fi show that feels hugely relevant, *Person Of Interest* boasts some ingenious twists, breathtaking action and an impressive central conspiracy that never lets up. Unmissable TV.

Our rating: ★★★★★

PERSON OF INTEREST

The future isn't set in this mind-bendy crime series.

WORDS **JOSEPH MCCABE**

There are some shows that announce they're science fiction with all the subtlety of a Star Destroyer roaring overhead. Then there are those that reveal what they're up to a little more slowly. One such show is *Person Of Interest* – though you could argue it's as much science fact as fiction, seeing as the series, created by *The Dark Knight* writer Jonathan Nolan, takes its cue from the latest crime prediction technologies.

"There is a really strong streak of sci-fi here," Nolan tells us. "It's a grounded show. This is the real world, and it looks like the New York we all recognise. But the show is set maybe five minutes into the future, in which all of this hardware, all of this software, all of this shit that we have in our pockets, on our desktops, suspended from the stop light... What happens when all that shit starts talking to each other efficiently? What happens when that data begins to analyse itself? For fans of

science fiction... we're really right f*cking there. We're really right on the threshold of it. And it's going to come along in ways that are both banal and incredible and surprising.

"We ask our writers to justify all the technology in their episodes," Nolan explains. "Our characters, their rationale, their reasons for doing things should be grounded but beyond that we like the idea of characters that have ambitious plans, who have philosophies that they adhere to. That makes for good drama."

Person Of Interest's first year began when billionaire techno wizard Harold Finch (*Lost's* Michael Emerson) recruited John Reese (Jim Caviezel) in his crusade to stop crimes before they happen; throughout the season the men learned to trust one another. And that was only the beginning for the show.

"We aim to continue expanding our universe with new allies, new enemies, and a heightened rogues gallery," Nolan says. Get ready for a bumpy ride.

PART FIVE - THE FUTURE

“*Star Wars* is probably the most influential film of my generation. It’s the personification of good and evil and the way it opened up the world to space adventure, the way westerns had to our parents’ generations, left an indelible imprint. So, in a way, everything that any of us does is somehow directly or indirectly affected by the experience of seeing those first three films.”*



THE FUTURE



Force To Be Reckoned With

SFX editor Richard Edwards explains why *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is truly a new hope... (First appeared in SFX magazine)

*W*e've been here before. Back in 1999, the world was united in excitement about a new *Star Wars* movie.

Every generation has a legend and every saga has a beginning, we were told – and we lapped it up. The trailers had been fantastic, so much so that there were stories of people buying tickets for a film, watching the *Star Wars* teaser and going home before the feature presentation started. The trailers had promised lightsabers. Incredible visuals. Skywalkers. The sound of Darth Vader breathing...

It was supposed to be the seminal moment for a generation who'd grown up feeling the Force, but instead we got trade disputes, senate chambers, a whiny kid and Jar Jar Bleedin' Binks. It was as if millions of voices suddenly cried out in terror, and refused to

be silenced because the increasingly influential internet gave them the chance to vocalise their criticism of every little detail.

While the *Star Wars* prequels aren't actually the disasters many people will tell you, they did get a hell of a lot wrong, tarnishing the unconditional love many felt for the *Star Wars* series. A cynic might argue that *The Force Awakens*, aka *Episode VII*, is destined for a similar fate to *The Phantom Menace*. It has no god-given right to be brilliant, of course, and thousands of Christmases may turn out to be a little less amazing than we'd hoped for if the most anticipated film in the history of, well, forever turns out to be a bit of a damp squib.

But we don't think there's much danger of that. OK, we've just about come to terms with the fact that *Episode VII* probably won't be the best movie ever – it's unlikely to even be the best *Star Wars* movie – but right now there are enough good reasons to get excited about *The Force Awakens* to fill a space cruiser. >>

THE FUTURE



TREASURE CHEST

It's been three years since Disney handed George Lucas a cool \$4 billion for the keys to his *Star Wars* empire. Even though we're yet to see a movie, it's already looking like the bargain of the century. There were moans back in 2012 that the move would lead to the Disneyfication of that galaxy far, far away – Jar Jar with Mickey Mouse ears, perhaps, or Chewbacca singing 'Whistle While You Wookiee' – but that hellish vision doesn't seem to have come to pass. In fact, as they've done with Marvel, Disney seems content to allow Lucasfilm to make *Star Wars* the way it wants to, with minimal interference from above – the trailers haven't even carried Disney branding. Disney are savvy enough to know that they mess with the *Star Wars* fanbase at their peril, that they could throw away a whole lot of good will (and potential dollars) if they get it wrong. (Let's not forget that the Marvel movies since the Disney

continued on page 128

STAR WARS MEMORIES

KEVIN SMITH

Writer, director, geek king.



My first memory of *Star Wars* was with my friend John. We were in the second grade in 1977. He got the first action figures. Right before the movie came out they advertised: "Order these *Star Wars* early bird action figures!" It was like a pack that had Darth Vader, R2-D2, Luke Skywalker and Ben Kenobi and maybe Princess Leia. He brought the figures to school and it captured my imagination. I hadn't seen the movie yet, but I went home and immediately everybody was like, "Did you see this *Star Wars* movie?" And then we went that night and, my god, I fell in love. That's when it became my religion. Up until that point I was a seven-day Catholic kid. I was an altar boy. But after I saw *Star Wars* I was a Darth Vader acolyte for the rest of my life. That was where I wanted to live. So if you want to talk about transforming figures, at age seven, holy cow.

Sally Browne

J.J. Abrams

The man at the helm of *The Force Awakens*.



Harrison Ford is known as a very collaborative performer. What were his thoughts on how Han Solo has aged since we last saw him?

I think it was really important to him that Han Solo had lived a life. Meaning he can't come in and do, or be expected to do, the same thing he did when he was thirty. And so we both obviously agreed with that. It would be ridiculous

if he hadn't matured somewhat. But at the same time, as we all know, how much do we ever really change? And so he's still very much Han Solo.

***Star Wars* was already ahead of its time in technology when it first debuted. Now what does technology bring to this episode?**

Well, what's so cool about doing this movie is we got to use all sorts of technology. Even stuff that hadn't been used in a long time. There were a lot of assumptions that certain things would be CG and done on the computer, and we ended up doing them practically, and we used CG to remove things instead of adding things. So that was really fun. It's incredible how much the animatronic puppeteering work has evolved too; it's not just the computers that have gotten better, but practical effects have gotten better. So we were really lucky to have an incredible group to work with. And I think that you'll see that was our goal – the story was the master we were serving, not, "Oh, here's a visual effect or technology." And making sure we were working really hard to tell as good a story as we could using whatever technology was available, old or new.

What was the challenge in working with both the new and old ensemble casts?

It was incredible fun to work with the original cast, for obvious reasons. But it was a wonderful thing – maybe even the best part – working with all of them, with the new young cast as well. Partly because they brought such energy, and the only baggage they brought to it was they knew of *Star Wars* and were fans in their own ways. Of course when you imagine almost forty years going by since you've played a part, that's almost a lifetime of experience to have coming into this. So it was wonderful to have the mix of the brand new and the veteran actors come together. That was really fun.

Did you find yourselves creating an entire mythology for future *Star Wars* films or was what you guys were concocting mostly for the purpose of this film?

Well, when Lawrence Kasdan and I were working on the story, we had a sense of where we thought things would go. So of course there are a number of things we use and set up. And it's wonderful to see how Rian Johnson has taken our story and has... Of course we had meetings and stuff beforehand, but he's taken it and really made it his own and continued the story his way. But there are of course many things in this film that are very clearly part of a continuum.

In developing a new trilogy how important was the feedback of fans [of the original trilogy]?

Obviously the fans of *Star Wars* aren't just incredibly passionate, but they feel in a weird way like family. Meaning, I know what it feels like to love this world that George Lucas created. So it was important to me that we do something that honours their commitment and their love of this thing. But you can't make a movie for the fans. You have to make a movie that you believe in your heart fans will love. And we're doing the best we can to do that.

As a fan, did you have any 'pinch me' moments?

I am not joking when I say that every day there were multiple 'pinch me' moments. [Laughs.]





Rey (Daisy Ridley)
and Finn (John
Boyega) on the run.

GET UP TO LIGHT SPEED

We've plundered press releases, interviews, novels, comics and games* to piece together what's been happening since Return Of The Jedi. Facts in black, our speculation in red.

SOON AFTER RETURN OF THE JEDI...

- ⦿ The Empire didn't go quietly after the Emperor's demise. Imperial remnants continued to fight the Rebellion (soon rebranded as the New Republic) across the galaxy.
- ⦿ The late Emperor left a 'will' commanding loyal officers to purge planets of strategic importance – including his homeworld, Naboo.
- ⦿ A pivotal battle took place between the New Republic and the Empire over the desert world of Jakku, a year after the Battle of Endor. The skirmish is where the Star Destroyer *Inflictor* (the wreck seen in the second trailer) crash-landed on the planet.
- ⦿ Darth Vader turned into an icon and a martyr – acolytes painted "Vader Lives" tags on walls, while his lightsaber became a sought-after collector's item.
- ⦿ While on a mission to liberate Imperial-occupied star systems, Han Solo and Chewbacca defied orders and gathered a ragtag assortment of smugglers and scoundrels in a quest to liberate Chewie's homeworld, Kashyyyk.
- ⦿ Some Mandalorian armour "pitted and pocked, as if with some kind of acid" was found on Tatooine. **If this doesn't mean Boba Fett escaped the Sarlacc, it's a very cruel joke.**

OVER THE NEXT 30 YEARS...

- ⦿ The First Order, a group with similar ideals to the Empire, will eventually spring up to take its place. Chuck Wendig's *Aftermath* novel, set after the Battle Of Endor, revealed a nameless, manipulative Imperial admiral who, believing the organisation had become an "ugly, inelegant machine", moved to fill the post-Palpatine power vacuum. **We're assuming he played a key role in the formation of the First Order – who knows, he may turn out to be the organisation's leading light, Supreme Leader Snoke.**
- ⦿ A new organisation called the Resistance will become the principal adversary of the First Order. **They carry Rebel Alliance insignia, so it looks like the group will grow out of the New Republic.**

THE FORCE AWAKENS ERA

- ⦿ **The Jedi and the Force have apparently disappeared into myth.**
- ⦿ The First Order has built a new superweapon to put the Death Star to shame. Starkiller Base is an ice planet armed with the firepower to wipe out entire star systems. The facility is commanded by General Hux.
- ⦿ *Episodes I-IX* (the 'Saga' movies) focus on the Skywalker family, so presumably at least one of the new characters will continue the lineage. J.J. Abrams says "it's completely intentional that [Rey and Finn's] last names aren't public record," **so don't be surprised if one (or both) turns out to be a chip off the old Skywalker or Solo block.**
- ⦿ Finn is a First Order Stormtrooper who decides he's "got nothing to fight for" and does a runner. We've seen him brandishing Anakin and Luke's old lightsaber – does he feel the Force, or is this a red herring?
- ⦿ Finn will join forces with Rey, a scavenger on Jakku. She claims she's "no one", but the trailer implies the Force is calling to her.
- ⦿ Poe Dameron is the "best frickin' pilot in the galaxy", sent on a mission by a princess. His parents fought alongside Han, Luke and Leia in the Rebel Alliance, and he grew up on Yavin IV near a tree (taken from the old Jedi Temple) that feels the Force. **Could all three leads be Force sensitive?**
- ⦿ Maz Kanata is a pirate and the owner of a castle populated by a Jabba's Palace-like array of aliens. **Our guess is she's the alien on the poster, and probably the person handing Luke's lightsaber to Leia in the second trailer. We also reckon it's her voice talking about letting the Force in in the third trailer.**
- ⦿ Shiny Stormtrooper Captain Phasma is the big-screen franchise's first female villain and, says actress Gwendoline Christie, "the captain of the Stormtroopers".
- ⦿ Bad guy Kylo Ren is a member of the Knights of Ren and seemingly Vader's biggest fan. He built his own lightsaber, but is *not* a Sith – he's more of a Dark Side work-in-progress, who works for Snoke.
- ⦿ Snoke is the owner of the voice talking about "an awakening" in the first teaser. He's a performance-capture character, so could be alien, machine or a human with some kind of augmentation.
- ⦿ Luke is not on the poster. Abrams has said "it's no accident".
- ⦿ C-3PO has somehow acquired a red arm.
- ⦿ We still have no idea who or what Max Von Sydow is playing.
- ⦿ Jar Jar Binks may feature – as a skeleton in the desert.

* We've only used legitimate sources, so there's nothing here from leaked scripts!



Daisy Ridley

The newcomer who plays Jakku's most famous scavenger, Rey.

When did you first encounter *Star Wars*?

At some time in my childhood, I think I saw *Episode III* in the cinema, but my details are vague because I just remember fire and being absolutely terrified. I think I watched the prequels first, and then the sequels. It was always kind of like in the periphery, but I did not ever expect people to love it as much as I now see that they do.

What can you tell us about Rey?

I can tell you that she is a scavenger from the desert planet Jakku, and she starts the story very much alone and meets Finn and they go on an adventure. An action adventure and also an emotional journey for her.

Is it a very physical role? Did you have to undergo training?

Yes. I trained for many hours. I trained for five hours a day for three months.

What was the training like?

For an hour, we did the physical training – lifting many weights. I cannot say I did martial arts training. The people that trained me are martial artists, and I am not a martial artist. I would never do martial arts a disservice by saying I trained in martial arts. But I trained with the staff because I can use it as a defence mechanism. I did some climbing. We did guns. And ran around having fun.

Do you get to work with actual props much or is it more CG?

No, there's a picture of me with a real blaster, and that staff is real and it weighs quite a lot. Dragging that through the desert was not that great.

Was the costume heavy too?

No, it's the lightest thing in the world. My costume was incredible. I felt really sorry for John because he may have expired in the desert. J.J. kept telling him to run faster. Rey lives in Jakku. my costume looks as it would if you lived in the desert. When the wind blew, it felt wonderful.

How was it working with BB-8?

I was terrified with whoever I worked with! I guess something ran through my head of, "Oh my God. How am I going to speak to this thing like it's not a child?" Because he's cute. But there were four guys that created BB-8 who puppeteered him. They are incredible and we are great friends. He's like alive. The thing you see on screen, he has a soul. He is cute and important to the story. Working with him, it was like working with another person.



Rey's desert costume "was incredible".

buyout have generally been better and more adventurous than the ones before.)

If that fan-focused approach was ever in doubt, look at the choice of director for *The Force Awakens*. When Disney bought *Star Wars*, J.J. Abrams was attached to *Star Trek*, and initially turned down their approach. "I quickly said that, being a fan, I wouldn't even want to be involved in the next version of those things," he said at the time. "I'd rather be in the audience not knowing what was coming, rather than being involved in the minutiae of making them." Lucasfilm boss Kathleen Kennedy refused to take no for an answer, however, and eventually got her man. The lure of Tatooine, TIE Fighters and the Millennium Falcon was just too much for a guy whose solution for rebooting *Star Trek* was to make it more like *Star Wars*.

Like the other directors hired for the *Star Wars* movies coming between now and 2020 (*Episode VIII*'s Rian Johnson, *Episode IX*'s Colin Trevorrow, *Rogue One*'s Gareth Edwards, and the Han Solo movie's Phil Lord and Christopher Miller), Abrams is a huge *Star Wars* geek. He doesn't have to guess what someone might love about a *Star Wars* movie because it's part of his DNA, the original movie being one of the formative cinematic experiences that shaped his desire to become a filmmaker. Even George Lucas, the man who created the franchise, didn't have that hotline to the fans when he came to make the prequels – that's arguably one of the reasons the films he wanted to make were so far removed from what the *Star Wars* faithful desired. And if J.J. ever wanted to get back to the spirit of the original trilogy, he had the good sense to draft *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi*

continued on page 132

STAR WARS MEMORIES

NICK FROST

Cornetto Trilogy star, big screen bromancer.



The *Star Wars* trilogy. Even now it touches my life. I'm at a point now with a four-year-old son where we watched *A New Hope* together and it was kind of amazing. He sat there and watched the whole thing. My mum's family were Welsh and so we spent a lot of time there, down on the west coast in Pembrokeshire. I was there all summer. We made camps on the river bank and played with our *Star Wars* figures. Saturday mornings we were allowed to go to a shop next to the cinema in Fishguard – one of those shops where you go in and think, oh it sells rock and postcards and mugs with Fishguard on, but the more you go through there's actually a section that sells *Star Wars* figures. Every Saturday we were there buying *Star Wars* figures. My expectation of what J.J. is going to do is tremendous. I had a meeting with him before they started. We had lunch and he showed me round the storyboards. I could feel eight-year-old me doing a little spirit wee.

Nick Setchfield



John Boyega

From *Attack The Block* to the First Order as Finn.

Where were you when you found out you had the part of Finn?

I was in Mayfair in a café with J.J. and Larry [Kasdan]. They were just there and we spoke about the process of the seven months [of auditions] and thanking me for coming back. It's an interesting thing to hear at that point of your life. "You're thanking me for coming in for an audition with *Star Wars*?" It was very, very nice of him. And then he broke it to me that I was going to be the new star of the new movie. I felt great.

How was J.J. during the shooting – he's a massive fan of the franchise?

You'd think to yourself, wow, it's really cool to have a *Star Wars* fan direct a *Star Wars* movie because you know that person is going to take the fans' ideas into consideration, as well as paying homage to something everybody loves.

Did you ever discuss the fact that all the new leads are British?

No, I didn't. I just kind of went with it. There's the thing about opportunity. When you're hungry, you're not trying to examine the hand that's giving you the feed. All you're trying to do is get to the food, right? I was more fixated on just the excitement of being in this environment and being involved as much as I have been so far. I'm not an extra in this. I'm pretty much involved in this whole story. And for that, it's a blessing.

Was it frustrating keeping things a secret?

I believe in the old-school way of seeing movies. The old-school way was not knowing whether you wasted your money or not, because you didn't have an idea of how everything happens. You trusted your instinct in saying, "That poster looks good. That little two-second snippet looks good. How about we go see this movie?"

Has Joe Cornish been in touch? Because he gave you your big break with *Attack The Block*...

Joe Cornish came on set. For him, it was kind of like giving away your son to this new dude. For him, it felt like you have this son – you can't take care of him no more and he moves onto another new dad, and the dad has a Millennium Falcon that he gets to play with, and you're just there like, "Damn it!"

Has George Lucas visited the set?

No. I've never met George Lucas. The thing is, I think he wants to experience this movie as a fan, and rightly so. Making all these films and then selling it off, I would retire properly and just go to a normal theatre and see the fruits of my labour.



Oscar Isaac

Meet Poe Dameron, the best frickin' pilot in the galaxy.

Did you have any standout moments working on the film?

When we first got together to read the script and the first time we saw all of the cast together, and the first time I heard Anthony Daniels speak like C-3PO again, that was a pretty wild moment.

Do you think the new costumes will be iconic like the originals?

I think Michael Kaplan is an amazing costume designer, and he's created some really iconic costumes for us. So yeah, I think, yeah, they'll definitely be fused with the characters.

Your character appears to be quite the badass. How does he differ from some of the other badasses we've seen in these films, like Han Solo?

Because this guy's playing him. That's why!

It sure looks
hot in that suit.

STAR WEIRDS

We've flown from one side of this galaxy to the other, and we've seen a lot of strange stuff...

TURKISH STAR WARS

Defying the pesky laws of copyright like the Rebel fleet evading a flotilla of Star Destroyers, 1982's *Dünyayı Kurtaran Adam* aka *The Man Who Saved The World* is a Turkish sci-fi movie that splices micro-budget heroics with NASA rocket launch footage and, rather boldly, stolen chunks of *Star Wars* itself, tinted a sickly hue in a bid to hide the crime. Still, more faithful than the Special Editions...

BLAME IT ON THE WOOKIEE

Beamed from a boogieified parallel universe where the Empire unleashed the might of the Death Glitterball, this addled dance routine sees troupes of Vaders and flying Threepios engaged in synchronised frugging to a funkied-up version of the *Star Wars* theme. Rumoured to hail from a '70s French variety show but, unsurprisingly, no one's taken credit. Behold the madness at <http://bit.ly/starwarsdisco>.

MR R2-T2

Ever wondered what everyone's favourite astromech droid was really saying beneath that endless parade of bleeps, squawks and burbles? Now it can be revealed. "Crazy fool!" goes the rough translation. "I ain't gettin' on no spaceship!" This bling-tastic, *A-Team* styled Artoo – based on a gag from *Family Guy*'s spoof trilogy – is on display at Steve Sansweet's legendary merch shrine Rancho Obi-Wan. Quit yo' jibber-jabber, Jabba!

STAR WARS STEW

Even Darth Vader put his Force-throttling ways on hold to join the *Empire Strikes Back* cast on deathlessly wholesome kids show *Blue Peter* in 1980. Mark Hamill and Carrie Fisher gamely nosed on specially prepared 'Star Wars Stew' – sausage, baked beans, chopped tomatoes and Jawa eyeballs. Yum. Alas Harrison Ford wasn't there to do his legendary grump-scowl as he spooned down the chow...

HUNGARIAN STAR WARS POSTERS

Imagine the contents of George Lucas's head exploding on mescaline and you're still not even close to the phantasmagorical weirdness of these Hungarian *Star Wars* posters. Like visions glimpsed in a fever dream of a half-remembered movie, they seem to be ripped straight from the unconscious... of a maniac. The Death Star in Darth Vader's eye socket on the Jedi one is design genius, mind.

ALAN MOORE DOES STAR WARS

Future comics magus Alan Moore entered a galaxy far, far away in the early '80s. "Tilotny Throws A Shape", a strip for Britain's *The Empire Strikes Back Monthly*, made the jump to headspace rather than hyperspace, marooning Princess Leia on a world where pan-conceptual entities cry "I've invented form! I've invented mass! Oh, cleverest Tilotny! Everything has edges!" Goddam bloody hippies.

THE POWER OF THE FORCE BEAM

It takes a certain deranged bravery to pimp your copyright-busting lightsaber knock-off in the Lucas-approved pages of *Star Wars Weekly* itself. We'd award them a Rebel medal for sheer chutzpah were it not for the fact that one of the ads may, just may, be the worst picture in the history of the world. Unless it's by a chimpanzee, in which case it's ruddy brilliant.

Nick Setchfield



Gwendoline Christie

The Game Of Thrones star takes charge of the Stormtroopers as Captain Phasma...

Tell us something about Captain Phasma...

She is *Star Wars*' first female villain. She is the captain of the Stormtroopers, and she is part of the dark side. I was completely overwhelmed to be a part of *Star Wars*. As soon as the film was announced, that they were going to start making *Star Wars* again, I immediately got onto my representatives and was like a dog with a bone: "I want to be in *Star Wars*, I want to be in *Star Wars*, I want to be in *Star Wars*."

Why did you want to be in *Star Wars*?

That people... it seems to evoke something in people that is pure joy and simplistic. It's simple in its joy. It's simple in its happiness. You have a pure and exciting experience with it.

One of my first Christmases, I remember being shown the film and being really excited by the way that it looked. Not just that; I got really excited by Princess Leia, and that there was a woman that knew her own mind, and was very strong. But also, that it was funny. And that it had characters like R2-D2 and C-3PO that I connected with very strongly. I adored R2-D2, and I became concerned when he got into danger. And I wanted him to survive and I felt like I loved him.

How was it wearing the armour? Did you offer advice about its design from an actors point of view?

They wanted me to be comfortable, but we have Michael Kaplan designing the costumes, and he's someone that I've deeply admired for a long time. One of the many incredible things he's known for is designing *Blade Runner*. I was very excited about the prospect of working with the person that had created the costumes for Rachel and the whole movie. So, I would never be so bold as to give advice, but also I didn't need to. And when I saw the costume, I was very, very excited. And so was everybody else.

Did you have pride in portraying very strong women?

I feel really, really lucky that I am doing my job at this time when it feels like things are changing, when it feels like women are being presented in a new more diverse and more realistic way. It seems to me that the world wants it. I am so over the moon to be a part of it.



Star Wars' first female baddie.

THE FUTURE



We won't lie, the sight of these guys brought a tiny tear to our eyes.

scripter Lawrence Kasdan to co-write when Oscar-winner Michael Arndt departed.

Abrams – and Lucasfilm as a whole – appear to be using the prequels as a guide of “what not to do” with a *Star Wars* movie. Much has been made of the decision to film as much live action as possible, with real sets, costumes and props. When even BB-8, the physics-defying ball droid, was revealed as a live-action prop – even though it would have arguably been easier to create on a computer – it was

STAR WARS MEMORIES

DAVE FILONI

Co-creator/executive producer on *Star Wars Rebels*.



What I remember is driving home after seeing *A New Hope*. My brother and I were blasting away at all the other automobiles like we were Han and Luke in the Millennium Falcon. It really made a huge impression on us. And I think this is true for a lot of fans, but the music was key.

Besides the amazing visuals, which were unlike anything I'd seen at the time, the music is so powerful and so memorable. My parents are both big fans of opera and symphony, so the music kind of became a great language between me and my parents, because my father would play the records. He would show me music in his collection, and play something from Strauss to show how it's similar to something John Williams had done in *Star Wars*, or something from Wagner. It just became a great link between me and my parents. I think *Star Wars* has done that for a bunch of different generations. It allows kids and parents to get together and watch something that they can truly enjoy and appreciate and come together on. I think that's one of the traits of the *Star Wars* franchise; something that makes it strong.

Richard Edwards



clear we were stepping into new territory. It's real, it's dirty and a welcome return to the used-universe chic that reinvented screen sci-fi back in 1977, and a much-needed departure from the computerised, cartoon sheen that made sure the prequels have dated faster than movies two decades their senior.

And on paper the story after *Return Of The Jedi* has much more appeal than prequels whose Empire wins/Darth Vader rises conclusion was never in doubt. We're in virgin storytelling territory here, every plot twist taking us somewhere new and unexpected. It makes complete dramatic sense that the death of the Emperor and the destruction of Death Star II didn't actually lead to century after century of jubilant Ewok dancing. The names of the factions may have changed in the 30 years since the “Yub-Nub” (the First Order and the Resistance subbing for the Empire and the Rebellion), but the battle continues. And *Star Wars* is more exciting when there's conflict at its centre.

It's a chance for ordinary people on forgotten planets to come to the fore and become heroes. The prequel movies were completely lacking in characters to relate to, humans and aliens battling the odds, and engaging character arcs – the Jedi were more-or-less indestructible, had limitless resources and were effectively superheroes. We may not know much about Finn and Rey (not even their surnames), but it's clear that they're cut more from the Han/Luke/Leia outsider template than Obi-Wan or even Anakin.

GLORIOUS ICONOGRAPHY

And then there's all the fan buttons the movie's hitting. The Millennium Falcon! Stormtroopers! Han! Luke! Leia! Chewie!

C-3PO! R2-D2! If J.J. did nothing else, they could have brought back those elements and been on the right track. Those icons are the reasons we fell in love with *Star Wars* in the first place – we've seen movies without (most of) them, and there's no doubt that *Star Wars* movies work better with the screech of a TIE Fighter or Han Solo being, well, Han Solo.

Because *Star Wars* is unique. People love the *Lord Of The Rings* and Marvel movies, but they live *Star Wars*. For millions of people, the original trilogy transported them to new worlds, and completely immersed them in a galaxy that may never have existed but always felt incredibly real – opening the door to big screen sci-fi in a way nothing before or since has managed.

So look beyond the inevitable merchandise overload – this is, after all, as much a capitalistic endeavour as an artistic one – and believe the hype. For kids it's a chance to visit worlds unlike any they've seen before, for adults (and you get the sense this is who the movie's really been designed for), this is the opportunity to be transported back to watching the originals when we were kids.

Just picture yourself in that cinema in December, the opening bars of John Williams' theme kicking in (don't worry too much about the lack of the Twentieth Century Fox fanfare), and the words of an unfamiliar opening crawl scrolling up the screen. Just remember how you felt when the Millennium Falcon swooped in that first teaser, or Han Solo told Chewie they were home – then multiply it by approximately 3,720. *The Force Awakens*, it's calling to you. Just let it in.

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 17 DECEMBER.

To helmet and back

Meet the man who sculpted an icon.

Of all the big screen's intimidating adversaries, none have left such an indelible mark as *Star Wars'* prime antagonist Darth Vader. Brian Muir, who sculpted the original mask way back in 1976, certainly didn't realise the magnitude of the iconic character he was crafting.

"I'm immensely proud to have been part of Vader's creation but it was impossible to imagine how iconic Vader would become – most of us didn't know what George Lucas was trying to achieve," he admits.

Although he worked from a three quarter-view sketch drawn by costume designer John Mollo, Muir had some significant design influence himself. "To present a less robotic appearance, I put a slight asymmetrical difference in Vader's cheeks, which became slightly exaggerated during the moulding and casting process," he reveals. "The menacing appearance continued to evolve by adding tear ducts and extended tubes. I then applied clay to the plaster mask and sculpted the subtle shape of the helmet, carving a strip that formed a widow's peak. It really drew attention to those piercing eyes, and gave Vader that intimidating stare."

Muir also worked on Vader's imposing body armour. "I had a mould of actor David Prowse's body to work from and used Ralph McQuarrie's detailed paintings as reference, while production designer John Barry had final say on any design improvements. The chest piece was the most prominent part of the armour. The fluid lines and subtle design, together with shoulder caps and the addition of a cape, helped to enhance Vader's powerful appearance."

So what's Muir's theory behind why Vader's look has generated such a power that resonates all the way to that chilling glimpse in *The Force Awakens* trailer? "It has so many powerful, menacing aspects. But I feel it's the staring eyes accentuated by the line of the helmet that is particularly unnerving. It generates a primeval fear that has prevailed and is timeless." **Oliver Pfeiffer**



Battle stations!

The newest Battlefront game hurls you into a galaxy far, far away...

The makers of *Battlefront* are well aware of what everyone who sees *The Force Awakens* wants from a *Star Wars* game this year – spectacle. A-Wings circling TIE Fighters in the skies above Hoth, Darth Vader cutting down Rebels and Imperial Walkers being ambushed by snowspeeders...

Battlefront has clearly been made to please *Star Wars* fans rather than *Call Of Duty* players, which is a wise move. "We are trying to provide for *Star Wars* fans across the board, that's what this is about: flying X-Wings, being a Jedi, being Stormtroopers and so on," says design director Niklas Fegraeus. "But at its heart this is a *Battlefront* game, which means that it's a first-person shooter, and kind of a third-person shooter, which is another important aspect of the franchise. So we are trying to mix the things that are the most important for those audiences, and trying to make a game identity out of it."

This is, essentially, a very simple game of Rebels vs Imperials, with no choice of classes like in the mid-noughties *Battlefront* games, and instead of giving the player an expansive arsenal, everyone carries a blaster. Other weapons, like sniper rifles, are used as bonus abilities. The maps are set across the rocky, volcanic Sullust, Hoth, Endor and Tatooine, and each is designed to offer varying playing experiences based on the terrain. "Different planets have different identities and structures. If you look at Hoth for example, you have very large snow surfaces, then on Endor there's trees and rocks all over the place."

Even if it's a little simple to play, the action looks extraordinary: the Battle of Hoth has never looked this pretty, to the point where it's easy to forgive the blatant continuity error of Luke running around Hoth with a green lightsaber. With a mode dedicated to fighter combat, too, this is more or less what a big *Star Wars* game should be with *Episode VII* just a month away. **Samuel Roberts**



Ready to take to the skies?

ENTER THE DROID

With *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* opening just before Christmas, we round up the coolest, cuddliest must-haves coming your way this festive season...

WORDS: [JOSH WINNING](#)

BB-8 SPHERO ▶

RRP £129.99, [OUT NOW](#)

Move over R2-D2, there's a new adorable droid in town, and he's stolen our bionic hearts. App-enabled so you can guide him with your smartphone or tablet, BB-8 recognises and reacts to your voice and can even record holographic videos. Pretend you're on Jakku! Tease your dog! The possibilities are endless...



PLUSH TOYS ▶

RRP £14.99, OUT NOW

Yoda! Chewie! R2! All in squishy, huggable toy form! Ewoks have nothing on this cute collection – even Darth Vader looks like he just wants a hug.



▶ R2-D2 DESKTOP VACUUM

RRP £14.99, OUT NOW

The Force is strong with this one. Suction force, that is. Simply plug in the USB and use the little droid to Hoover up the remnants of your lunch.

▼ DEATH STAR MOOD LIGHT

RRP £19.99, OUT NOW

There's nothing like the tranquil glow of a Death Star to help you drift off to sleep at night, and this fully operational sphere comes with a transparent stand to give it the impression of floating in space.



▲ ANIMATRONIC DARTH VADER

RRP £99.99, OUT NOW

Impressive. Most impressive. Fully articulated and towering at 17in high, this action figure comes with a motion-activated lightsaber, battle sound effects, and the dulcet tones of James Earl Jones.

DRONE MILLENNIUM FALCON ▶

RRP £99.99, OUT NOW

Jury's out on if it can make the Kessel Run in less than 12 parsecs, but this remote control miniature of Han Solo's ride wins when it comes to sheer awesomeness, with in-built lights and impressive manoeuvrability. No getting out and pushing required.



▶ STAR WARS TOYSHIRT

RRP £12, OUT NOW

It's Vader versus Obi-wan with this shirty re-creation of the *A New Hope* duel. Available in kid sizes (ages 5-13 years), its clever pull tab reveals a panel of the duo locking lightsabers.

KYLO REN HELMET ▶

RRP £119.99, OUT NOW

Battle-scarred and equipped with its own voice changer, this man-sized helmet puts you right in the room with Kylo Ren, the big baddie in *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. Perfect for sympathisers of the villainous First Order.



▶ THE ART OF STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

RRP £25, OUT DEC

It's not out until the day after *The Force Awakens* blasts into cinemas, so expect Exogorth-sized spoilers in this peek into the making of the movie. Going by previous 'Art Of' books, it should be full of eye-popping imagery, plus insights from Abrams and his team.



Star phwoars

Amazing accessories from a galaxy far, far away...

▶ HAN SOLO IPHONE CASE

RRP £8.99, OUT NOW

We'll be whispering "I love you" at this for weeks.



◀ STACKING MUGS

RRP £14.99 PER SET, OUT NOW

Mix'n'match Luke, Han and a Stormtrooper.

▶ BB-8 CUP

RRP £5.95, OUT NOW

The little tumbler becomes a... tumbler.



◀ YODA TALKING CHRISTMAS DECORATION

RRP £12.95, OUT NOW

"Hanging on a tree we are, hmm?"

▶ R2-D2 USB STICK

RRP £14.95, OUT NOW

8GB of awesome.



▲ CHRISTMAS JUMPERS

£39.99 EACH, OUT NOW

If you absolutely have to wear a Christmas jumper, better make it one with lightsabers.



COMING SOON!

J.J.'s a busy man – we've got the low-down on his next eight projects...

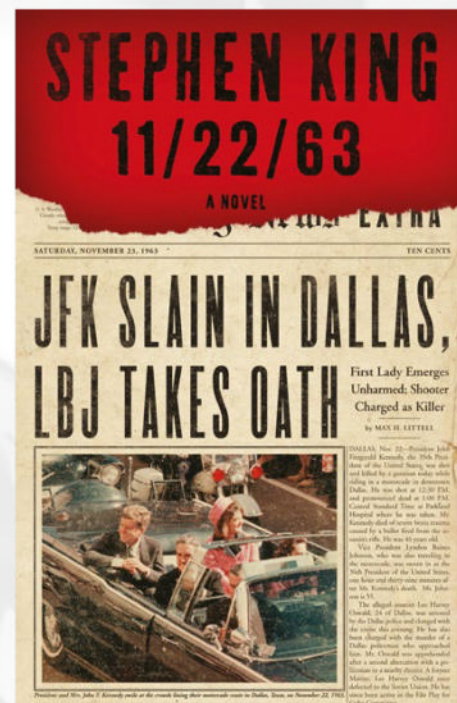


STAR TREK BEYOND

With J.J. busy working in a galaxy far, far away, directing duties on the third *Star Trek* movie have been taken up by *Fast & Furious* filmmaker Justin Lin. Abrams is still involved as producer ("it's a little bittersweet," he's said), while Simon Pegg and Doug Jung are on screenwriting duties (yes, Simon Pegg). In front of the camera it's business as usual, with Chris Pine and the rest of the cast all returning. Can the film break the threequel curse? Well, the lack of a number three in the title bodes well, and Abrams has a good track record with threequels considering his *Mission: Impossible* film...

11/22/63

"I've been a fan of Stephen King since I was in junior high school," J.J. said of producing this adaptation of King's 2011 bestseller, in which an unsuspecting teacher stumbles across a time portal and attempts to prevent the JFK assassination on that titular date. J.J. adds, "The chance to work with him at all, let alone on a story so compelling, emotional and imaginative, is a dream." The adap will star James Franco and air on streaming channel Hulu.



CLOVERFIELD 2

Scheduled for release in 2018, this much-belated sequel (the first film came out in 2008) remains shrouded in mystery. The last time J.J. talked about it was in 2013, when he merely admitted "we've had a couple of discussions about cool ways to do it". We expect a ridiculously exciting teaser trailer to come out of nowhere really soon. Probably featuring another famous landmark getting a facelift...



MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE 6

After the runaway success of the fifth Ethan Hunt outing (*Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation*, which has made a massive \$673m worldwide, almost equalling the box office haul of part four), a sixth mission has been fast-tracked by Tom Cruise and co. "We're starting to work on it now. We'll probably start shooting it next summer," Cruise told Jon Stewart on *The Daily Show* in August 2015. Abrams will again produce through Bad Robot, and Paramount couldn't be happier about sending their daredevil spy out into the field again. "There's no question that Ethan Hunt deserves another film," says Paramount vice chairman Rob Moore.

VALENCIA

Mary Elizabeth Winstead stars in this gritty, micro-budget thriller from debut director Dan Trachtenberg. After surviving a car accident, a young woman wakes up in a cellar, where she's apparently being held captive by a man who tells her a chemical attack has left the outside world uninhabitable. "As it goes on, it gets progressively darker and darker, and less and less funny, and weirder," Winstead has promised of the film, which Abrams is producing through Bad Robot.

PORTAL & HALF-LIFE

Abrams is overseeing movie versions of the Valve videogames, both of which incorporate elements of sci-fi – the former involves wormholes, while the latter follows a researcher attempting to fight his way out of a lab. The adapts were announced in 2013, and while Abrams hasn't spoken much about the productions since then, he's aware of the less-than-stellar results of a lot of videogame adapts. "Our goal here to is to treat the world Valve has created... with respect," he has said. Watch this space.



ROADIES

"*Roadies* is Cameron Crowe at his most musically passionate, colourful-character best," J.J. reckons of this new comedy series from Showtime, which he's producing. Crowe wrote and directed the show's pilot episode, which follows roadies (aka techies) on a rock and roll tour. Think *Almost Famous* in TV format. "Those quietly devoted people live huge lives, they're often the real keepers of the flame," Crowe has said. Rock on.



COMING SOON!

WESTWORLD

Based on the cult 1973 film of the same name, this sci-fi series is described as a "dark odyssey" that takes a bleak look into the future, where artificial intelligence runs wild. As with *Person Of Interest*, the show is being run by Jonathan Nolan (*The Dark Knight*), with Abrams producing, while the stellar cast includes Anthony Hopkins, Ed Harris, Evan Rachel Wood and James Marsden. "I've collaborated with J.J. now for several years," says Nolan. "He's a lovely guy, a brilliant guy." We're expecting big things, especially after watching the unbelievably compelling trailer.



Ed Harris takes on the lead role of the Man in Black.



THE 25 GREATEST J.J. ABRAMS MOMENTS

Planes and trains, monsters and aliens, plus plenty of explosive action – we count down J.J.’s finest moments in TV and film.

WORDS: DAVE BRADLEY, ROSIE FLETCHER, JOSH WINNING

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OPENING UP THE CASE



SUPER 8 (2011)

Abrams’ sci-fi started life as a celebration of the home movies he made as a kid, and as the closing credits roll on *Super 8*, we get to see the zombie film the main characters have been making. It’s brilliantly creaky, over-the-top and really feels like something the kids would make themselves.

24

FRANCIE IS KILLED BY HER DOPPELGÄNGER...

ALIAS ‘PHASE ONE’ (2003)

The episode that shook up *Alias*! Francie, best friend of our heroine Sydney, is killed by lookalike assassin Allison; the long-term head of SD-6 goes missing to be replaced by Rutger Hauer; the main set of the show gets shot to pieces – here we got proof that the *Alias* writers were not afraid to kick over the familiar pillars of the show when required, and it was all the better for it.



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KIRK MEETS SPOCK

STAR TREK (2009)

A bit of a coincidence maybe, but that doesn’t detract from the moment of wonder when the exiled Kirk (Chris Pine), having just had a near miss with an ice beast, discovers his saviour is none other than Spock from 129 years in the future. With a warm message about fate and friendship, the moment was also a respectful acknowledgement of the original franchise with Leonard Nimoy so much more than a cameo.

22

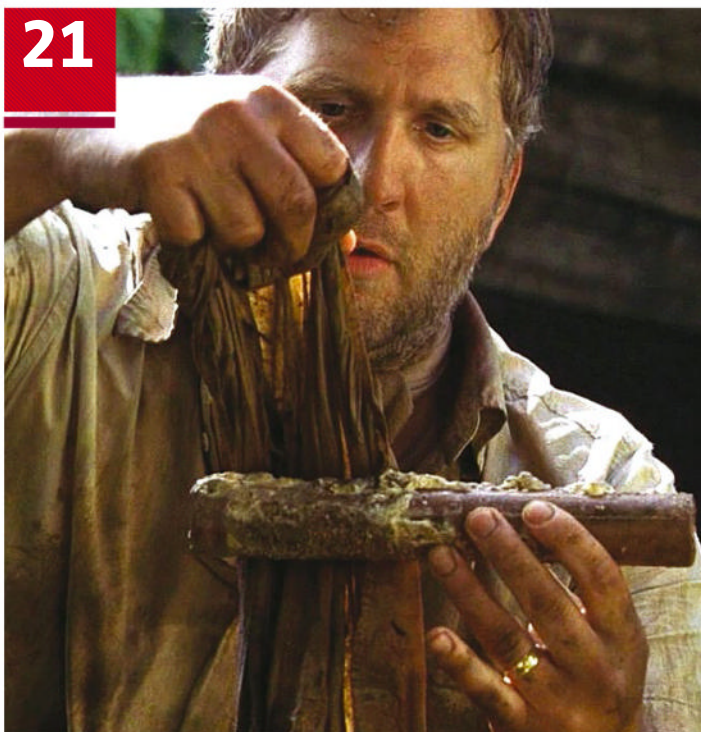
WALTER AND PETER BECOME CARTOONS...

FRINGE 'LYSERGIC ACID DIETHYLAMIDE' (2011)

Forever known as 'the one with the animated airship'. With the help of pseudoscience and drugs, Walter and Peter enter Olivia's mind, joyously realising they have become cartoon versions of themselves. The rest of this third season episode then plays out in cartoon form with our heroes travelling by Zeppelin to find Olivia's childhood home. It's animated by Zoic Studios (most famous for CGI effects for movies like *The Day After Tomorrow*).



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**DYNAMITE DEATH**

LOST 'EXODUS' (2005)

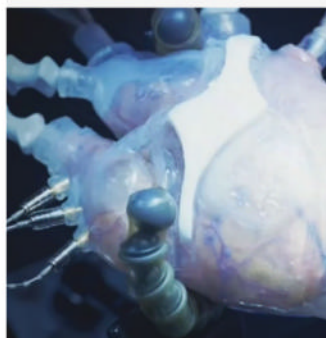
Grim, shocking, a little bit funny, this explosive scene from the finale of season one sees science teacher Leslie Arzt blow himself up with dynamite while giving a lecture on how to handle dynamite. Cemented the idea that anything could happen and closed with grim punchline: "You have some... Arzt... on you."

20

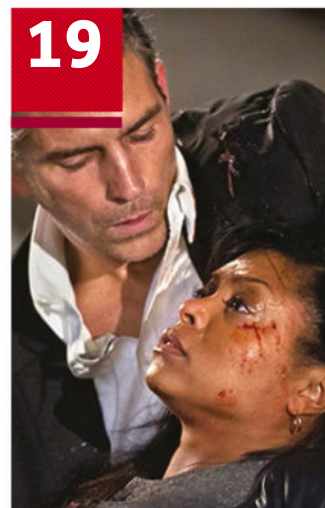
A MAN PREDICTS THE PRECISE TIME OF HIS OWN HEART ATTACK...

ALMOST HUMAN 'ARRHYTHMIA' (2013)

An armed man bursts into a hospital claiming to know the exact minute he's going to die – which he promptly does. It's an shocking start to a truly science-fictional episode. *Almost Human* takes place in 2048 but doesn't always explore the opportunities provided by the dystopian setting. With 'Arrhythmia', though, we discover a black market trade in artificial organs which can be remotely turned off.



19

**DETECTIVE CARTER IS KILLED...**

PERSON OF INTEREST 'THE CROSSING' (2013)

A cruel but powerful blow for fans of the show as a major character is killed off after 54 episodes. Just as Reese kisses her and delivers a moving speech about how she's the reason he didn't kill himself all those years ago – unexpectedly adding some romance to the show – Detective Jocelyn Carter is shot from the shadows by villain Simmons. Ouch.

18



A VULCAN IN A VOLCANO



STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS (2013)

"I am, surprisingly, alive." Spock (Zachary Quinto) tumbles headlong into the fiery heart of a volcano to save a planet in this blistering set piece which plays Spock's selfless rationalism as the perfect counterpart to Kirk's fearless loyalty, as he breaks the rules to save his friend.

15



PARIS IS DESTROYED

ARMAGEDDON (1998)

Before he decimated New York in *Cloverfield* J.J. flirted with mass destruction, working on this epic script for Michael Bay which checks off Paris monuments – the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, the Sacré-Cœur – and then blasts them to smithereens as an asteroid hits earth. Boom.

14

THEY'RE BAAAAACK...

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS (2015)

"Chewie, we're home," says Han Solo (Harrison Ford) at the end of the very first *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* trailer, and just like that, we know there's no other film we're more excited about seeing than this one.



17



ROBOT PARTNER UNDER THE TRUCK

ALMOST HUMAN 'PILOT' (2013)

Crunch! *Almost Human* partners Karl Urban's flesh-and-blood cop John Kennex with robotic detective Dorian, played by Michael Ealy. But before the two meet, Kennex has a more grimly logical sidekick: an unnamed MX-43 android. Kennex naturally distrusts 'bots, but when his MX-43 pesters him with questions his patience is really stretched: he pushes that cyber-sucker out of the car into the path of a truck.

16



THE CORNFIELD CHASE

JOY RIDE (2001)

After mercilessly taunting truck driver 'Rusty Nail' via CB radio, road trippers Paul Walker, Steve Zahn and Leelee Sobieski face the full wrath of a psycho with a big-ass lorry as they're chased on foot through rows of corn by Rusty's truck and its searchlight beams. Frantic and nerve-shredding.

13



WALTER RECEIVES A MYSTERIOUS DRAWING IN THE MAIL

FRINGE 'WHITE TULIP' (2010)

Peter Weller guest stars as Alistair Peck, a scientist trying to travel back in time to save his fiancée. Having failed to stop Peck, Walter later receives a message from him with a drawing of a white tulip. The tulip became a symbol of forgiveness and hope in the show, cropping up in many episodes, and Walter sends a similar picture to his son in the final episode.



12

CLIMBING THE BURJ KHALIFAMISSION: IMPOSSIBLE
– GHOST PROTOCOL (2011)

Every *M:I* movie has its central stunt, and *Ghost Protocol*'s sees Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) clambering up the outside of the world's tallest building. Cruise performed the stunt himself, and though he had a harness to stop him plummeting to his death, that doesn't stop the scene from getting hearts hammering.



11

**NEW CHARACTER SHAW TAKES CENTRE STAGE**

PERSON OF INTEREST 'RELEVANCE' (2013)

This episode up-ends the show's usual format so that we see the whole investigation from the perspective of CIA agents Shaw and Cole instead of our New York chums. When we realise the mission for Reese and Finch is actually to protect Shaw and bring her on board, and that they've been working off-stage in this episode too, it's a wonderful glimpse into the deeper *Person Of Interest* universe.

SURPRISE KEYBOARD SOLO AT THE 2009 MTV MOVIE AWARDS

10



'COOL GUYS DON'T LOOK AT EXPLOSIONS' (2009)

Alongside Will Ferrell, J.J. guest stars in a hilarious music video from The Lonely Island, most famous for *The LEGO Movie*'s 'Everything Is Awesome'. Halfway through, Andy Samberg suddenly bawls, "Keyboard solo? J.J. ABRAMS!" and our talented friend rocks out at the Yamaha.

09

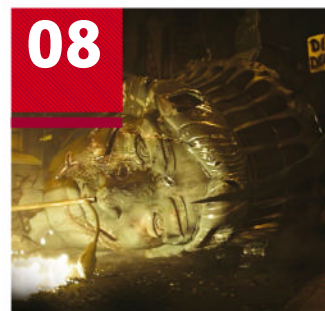
QUENTIN TARANTINO GOES DIE HARD...

ALIAS 'THE BOX (PARTS ONE AND TWO)' (2002)

"What are stories, but mystery boxes?" J.J. Abrams asked a TED conference in 2007. And in this *Alias* two-parter, that notion gets its most literal interpretation: a surprise that's wrapped up and presented to us like a menacing gift. And the giver of that gift in *Alias*? Villain Cole is played by none other than Quentin Tarantino, who's got SD-6 under siege.



08

**LIBERTY LOSES HER HEAD**

CLOVERFIELD (2008)

Before any footage of this alien invasion flick was even shot, Abrams and director Matt Reeves released a teaser trailer that ends with a shot of the Statue of Liberty's decapitated head being hurled into a New York street. The teaser incited a furor of interest, and the image of Liberty's severed head has become an enduring cinematic icon.

07



THE MILLENNIUM FALCON FLIES!

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS (2015)

Of all the shots in the first trailer for Abrams' *Star Wars* flick that had us trembling with anticipation, the most exciting of them all was this dizzying moment, in which the Millennium Falcon is pursued by shrieking TIE fighters. Vertiginously shot it may be, but it's most exciting because we've not seen the Falcon in action for over 20 years. It's good to have her back.

06

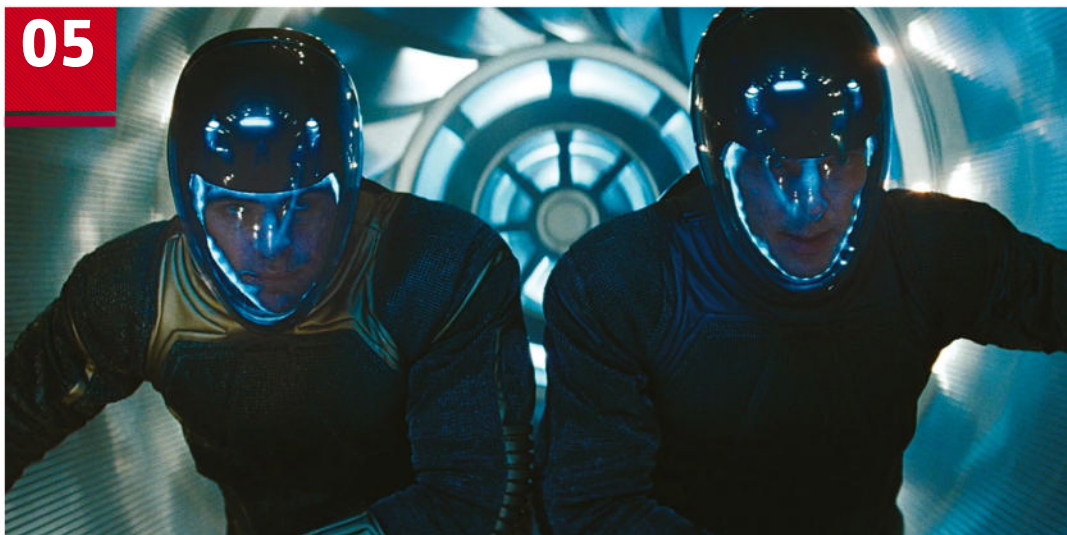
COUNTING TO 10

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE III (2006)

Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) returns, but he's in a spot of bother, strapped to a chair while a mysterious foe (played with steely menace by the late, great Philip Seymour Hoffman) threatens to shoot a gagged woman sitting opposite him. If there was any doubt Abrams would return the franchise to the gritty tone of the first movie, this nerve-jangling prologue put them to bed. The sight of Cruise bloodied, screaming and sweating is enough to turn the sturdiest stomachs, and the stakes have never felt higher.



05



SPACE JUMP

STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS (2013)

Kirk (Chris Pine) attempts to infiltrate the USS Vengeance by jetting through space wearing nothing more than a spacesuit. Dodging debris, his mission's further imperilled by Khan (Benedict Cumberbatch), who collides with debris and drifts dangerously off-course... This is fist-chewingly tense stuff, particularly when Kirk's helmet starts to crack in the sub-zero temperatures.

04

BIRTH OF A LEGEND

STAR TREK (2009)

In a genius bit of franchise rebooting, Abrams and co start the new *Star Trek* by creating a separate timeline – and presto, fans both old and new are happy. Fittingly, the catalyst for that timeline is a clash between the Romulans and George Kirk (Chris Hemsworth), who sacrifices himself in order to save his family just as his wife gives birth to James T. Kirk...



03



NEW YORK PARALLEL UNIVERSE IS REVEALED

FRINGE 'THERE'S MORE THAN ONE OF EVERYTHING' (2009)

What a way to end a season! FBI agent Olivia Dunham (played by Anna Torv) discovers that not only is there a parallel universe, but that it's one where New York's Twin Towers still stand. Added bonus? The audience discover that the character she's been tracking, William Bell, is actually played by *Star Trek* legend Leonard 'freakin' Nimoy. A series of iconic visuals leave us with an astonishing cliff-hanger. OMG.

02



THE TRAIN DISASTER

SUPER 8 (2011)



The disaster scene in Abrams' love letter to Spielberg is so tense, you're at risk of forgetting to breathe for the whole three minutes. Joe (Joel Courtney) and his buddies – Preston Scott (Zach Mills), Martin Read (Gabriel Basso), Cary McCarthy (Ryan Lee) and Alice (Elle Fanning) – are shooting their low-budget

zombie movie at a train station when a freight is derailed by a maniac in a car. As the massive locomotive smashes through the landscape, the kids run for their lives, dodging shrapnel and fireballs as they go. Meanwhile, their Super 8 camera captures the whole thing – including something huge and distinctly non-human escaping the wreckage...

01



LIFE'S A BEACH

LOST 'PILOT (PART ONE)' (2004)



A man wakes up in a jungle, panting and afraid. Stumbling onto a beach, he's swallowed up by chaos as the survivors of a plane wreck cling to life – and him. Staggering through the wreckage, the man attempts to help, then somebody stands too close to a rotating turbine... The opening six minutes

of *Lost*'s first episode shellshocked millions of viewers back in 2004, and a phenomenon was born. Directed by J.J. Abrams, the pilot episode was the most expensive ever shot at the time, filming on location in Hawaii, and it's a masterclass in WTF storytelling. Shooting the episode like a movie, Abrams helped change the face of TV, crafting something that could rival even the biggest cinematic blockbusters for spectacle.



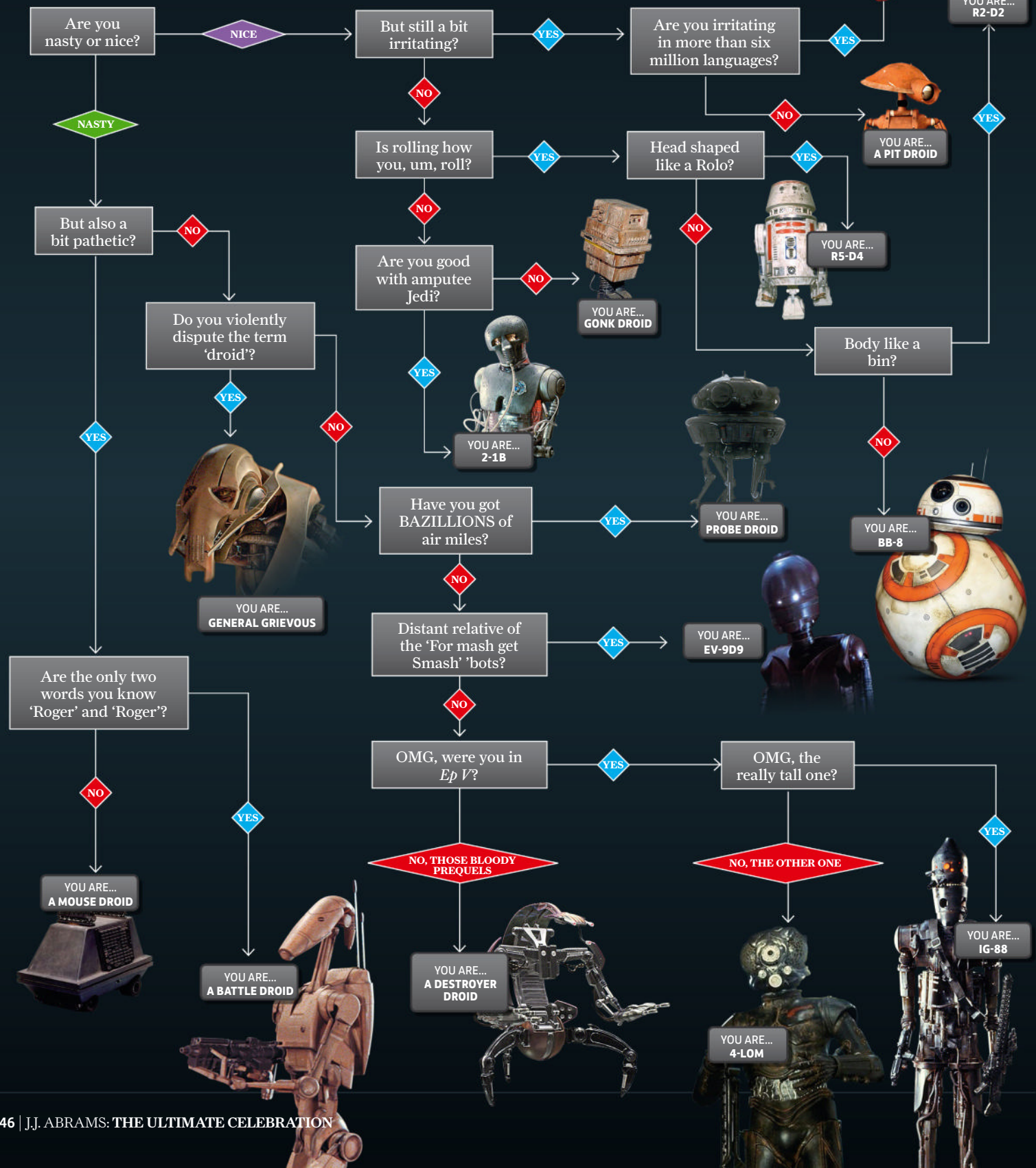
WHICH DROID ARE YOU?

Do you bleep or babble? Do you amble around Death Stars or help blow them up? Discover your droid-denity below!



YOU ARE...
C-3PO

YOU ARE...
R2-D2



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"THE FORCE IS
STRONG WITH THEM!"
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VIRGINIA HEY

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PAM ROSE

"SCI-FI SCARBOROUGH IS A
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ENVIRONMENT."
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*GUESTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE



*Oh we do like to geek
beside the seaside!*